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A HOUSE OF CARDS.

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# A HOUSE OF CARDS.

A Novel.

BY

MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

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1868.

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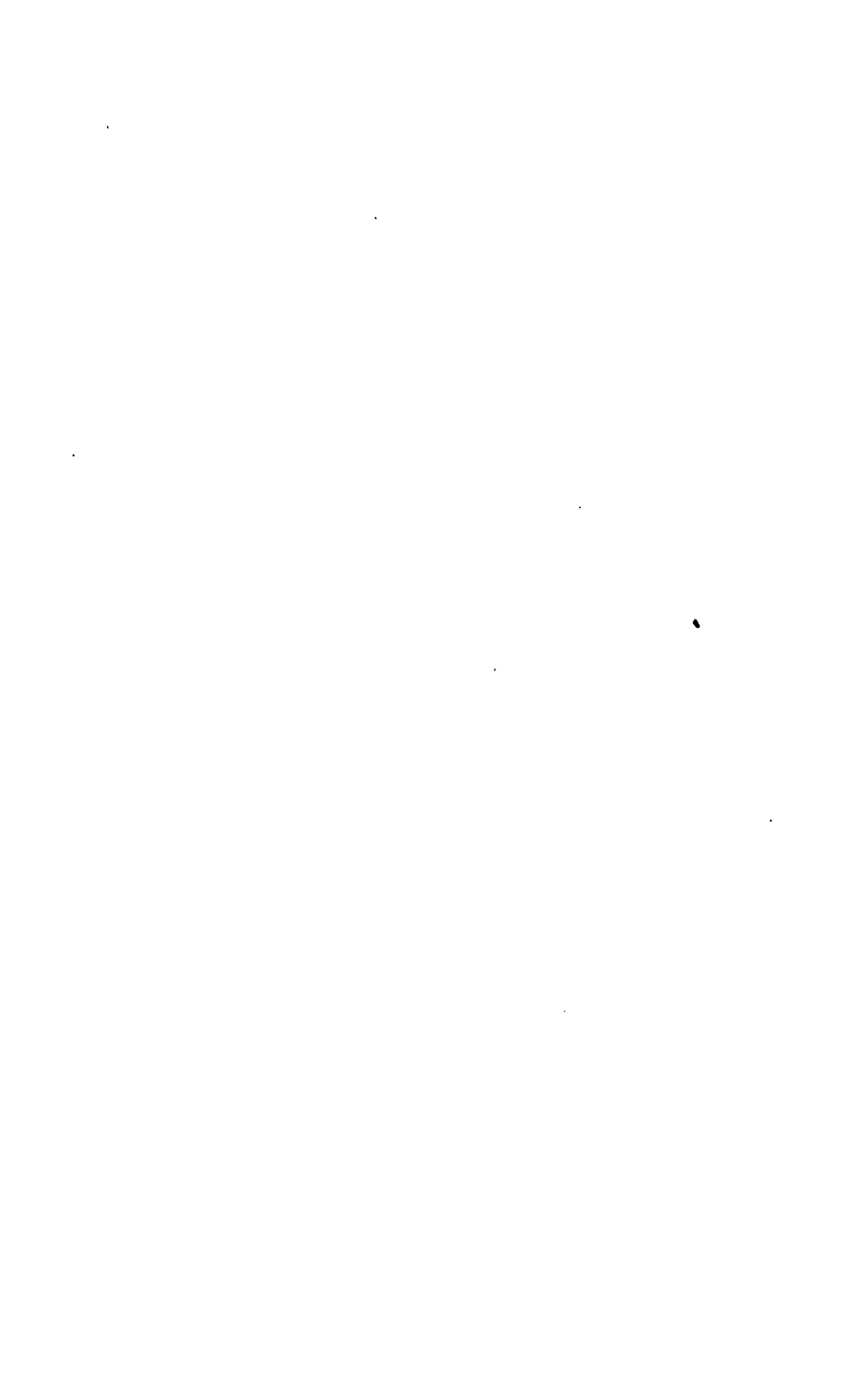


TO

MY DEAR FATHER,

BY WHOM IT WAS SUGGESTED,

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED.



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JULIA PEYTON, BUILDER.

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**Book the First.**

**JULIA PEYTON, BUILDER.**



## CHAPTER I.

### WITH CLOSED DOORS.

CHANGE—very busy everywhere, and of course synonymous with improvement,—in men, morals, manners, architecture, drainage, and other interests of humanity—has not occupied itself particularly with Gray's-inn. The ghosts of the clients who carried their anxieties, their injuries, their projects, and their money thither, in the days long gone, and who emerged from either of the old gateways, leaving more or less of their respective burdens after them, might stroll about the old place very comfortably without suspecting from its appearance that time enough for their former existence to have been entirely forgotten in, has elapsed. The ghosts of the lawyers of that bygone period might look in upon their professional successors of to-day, and suffer no

shock to their sensibilities through the undisciplined intrusion of change, so far as the surroundings and accessories of the place are concerned.

Modern costume, regarded by the ghostly lawyers of the past, might indeed appear indecorous, wanting in primness, and in *cachet* to the very verge of indecency; but though they must look in vain for powder and pigtail, they would not be disappointed in dust. The ancient rooms are still grimy; the wide staircases, the ponderous balusters, the quaint ornamentation of wall and ceiling, are grim and dreary as in the time when the ghosts attended punctually at office-hours. The big knobs, which ponderously finished off the wide staircases in the ghosts' time, and have been polished by the casual pressure of whole legions of hands long ago skeleton, and dissociated from necessities of signing and sealing, are still in their sturdy, self-asserting places. Sparing have been the labours of the painter and the glazier; the ghosts may look in, if they please, through the small panes of ill-conditioned glass, set in the

thick ugly wooden framework, through which they looked out, in the day of their flesh and their weariness, on the grave expanse of gravel and flagstone, surrounded by the tall dull houses, which form the inner square.

Perhaps the more elderly of the ghosts might not recognise the flock of pigeons which come every day to the grim and unpromising legal precincts, unlikely playground as it seems, and unproductive of crumbs of comfort;—no one appears to know when the feathered clients first came there *in formâ pauperis*;—they at least have never been plucked;—but other change there is little or none. Still a strange air of solitude in the midst of a crowd sits upon the place; still the seclusion of concentrated attention, uninterrupted from without, is present there, though the air is full of the dull continuous sound of the roll and swell of life and movement in Holborn; still it needs an act of faith to believe in the near vicinity of anything so pleasant, so shady, and so suggestive of the possibility of leisure, not to say idleness, as the Gray's-inn gardens.

The legal ghosts might walk there o' nights "with mighty Verulam," and in their rambles meet more ancient "spirits by the way," who would have some right to be discontented with the havoc and discourtesy of change. But these would be the old, old ghosts of all, the cowed monks who leased their chantry, the mansion of Portpoole, to "certain students of the law," and the Dennys and Grays of Wilton, in the Plantagenet days. Jacob Tonson might find his way about the place blindfold—if the expression may be permitted in speaking of a ghost—and, strolling into Holborn, find his father's trade still flourishing.

Almost as the old square is to-day, it was one bright morning many years ago. Years not so many as to give anybody the unpardonably troublesome mental task of trying to supply "local colouring," and to lose sight of modern appliances to which we have all become so accustomed, that we take them for granted without a thought of their origin, as we take the penny-postage and the tax-gatherer; but a good number

in the brief reckoning of human lives. It is needless to be particular about the date; it suffices to state that the oracular cry, "Our young Queen and our old institutions," had not yet been uttered, and therefore had not been discovered to be equally popular and unmeaning; and the "education" of the Conservative party had not been commenced. Society found something to talk about, however, then as now, and the period was interesting in its general and particular aspects. This story has nothing to do with either, beyond this brief indication of the time when it had its beginning in the private room of a solicitor, who occupied a spacious set of chambers in one of the dingiest and grimmest houses in Gray's-inn-square.

Mr. Eliot Foster did not harmonise in outward aspect with his chambers. Most probably, as he was no longer a young man, and as he had been for many years a hard-working man, with a numerous and important *clientèle*; as he knew a vast number of family affairs, including not a few family secrets, and implying manifold reve-

lations of character—there were dark and dingy places in his mind, and corners full of ill-favoured rubbish and refuse. Such as terrible injustice, hatred, wrong, and vengeance; grasping avarice, pitilessness, and reckless use of power; evil, readily and quickly done, never to be undone or atoned for; and the hardly less terrible triumph of the evil-doer. When an experienced lawyer in large practice brings out of the storehouse of his memory things good and evil, the contemplation must be a strange and solemn exercise.

Mr. Eliot Foster did not look like a man in the habit of airing his collection of skeletons; he was of comfortable and gentlemanlike aspect, and in his well-preserved, middle-aged estate, looked satisfied with the world in which he lived, and with its treatment of him. Respectability, not of the high-and-dry, but of the average easy type, was evidently attributable to him; and not even in these modern days of suspicion, and the deserving of it, would anyone dream of suspecting Mr. Eliot Foster of being anything but the irreproachably upright, sagacious, and prosperous

man of business he looked. If there were anything of which one would have suspected Mr. Eliot Foster rather than knavery, that thing would certainly have been sentiment. The eminently practical was to be discerned in his face, his figure, his attitudes, his habits, and his dress. A fair-complexioned, clean-shaven, light-haired, hazel-eyed man, with a rather aquiline nose—what there was of aquiline being real, not a touch of the vulture about it;—a rather long upper-lip, and a well-cut mouth, with something in its expression which indicated that he might be melancholy when he was alone, but could not be more than “very cheerful” in society, not rising to the “jolly” standard on any occasion. A man of slight, but well-built, active figure, with remarkably well-shaped feet, and hands of almost feminine beauty, but which did not offend by effeminacy; such was Mr. Eliot Foster in external appearance.

Whether he would have struck the observer as the very model of all a solicitor in large and confidential business ought to be, would have

activity depended upon the character and designs of the observer. A man coming to him with business perfectly above-board, and capable of estimating the man according and understanding investment, business however complicated it is details, and involving no matter what responsibility and weight of consequences, would undoubtedly have felt that he was acquiring to the right man in the right place. There was a silent remark by Mr. John Fisher's reputation for ability and "back" was introduced into "solid" business—anything which in modern stock markets required to be "put in" through its "finger" at the market—such things were as "city work"—would as much have recognized that the city chambers in New York were not his congenial sphere for any reason; and that, while great instructions, warnings, or suggestions of how it would might have addressed themselves with confidence, however requiring an acquaintance had better take itself better than.

"Was this man—a calm, or self-possessed in manner, or merely given to the business of the

hour, so admirable a disciplinarian that no young man aspiring to a rise in the profession of clerkdom could have a better recommendation than that he had been at Foster's, and had only left to "better himself"—could entertain a sentimental grievance, and, moreover, could suffer it to trouble him in business-hours, and even at the commencement of the day's routine, when his administrative faculties were in particular requisition, would have been discredited by the casual observer. But—and this concerned Mr. Eliot Foster more nearly, and afforded him more satisfaction in feeling perfectly assured of it—his intimate friends, his closest and most habitual associates, especially his clerks, would have derided such an idea as a hallucination, weak-minded in its conception, if not deliberately malicious in its design.

London, in its business sense, had been awake and stirring hours ago ; London, in its fashionable sense, would soon be thinking of waking and stirring ; and the clerks at Mr. Eliot Foster's—he did all his own business and pocketed all his own profits, partnership being unknown to him, as to

his father before him—were in the full activity of “office-hours.” Noisy spluttering pens were going over paper and parchment with unpleasant sound; and the young gentlemen, whose voluminous neck-ties and deep, high coat-collars, quite the thing in those days, would procure for the wearers the pains and penalties of “guys” in our time, were working away with conscientiousness much accelerated by the presence of Mr. Eliot Foster in the adjoining room, and believed their employer to be equally energetically engaged in his particular pursuits. But the ingenious young gentlemen were mistaken. Mr. Eliot Foster—his new pen unstained by ink, the supply of large blue letter-paper, of a dreadful fashion and texture now happily obsolete, lying undisturbed upon the stained and ragged leather of his solid mahogany writing-table, the trim order of which ugly and ponderous article of furniture indicated the method and precision of its owner’s ways—was slowly pacing the room up and down, past the long narrow windows, his hands clasped behind his back, and an expression in his face which no mortal

eyes had beheld there for many a long (and prosperous) year.

Business correspondence at the period in question had not piled itself up after the inconsiderate and unlimited fashion of the present time. Just as people managed to exist without the perpetual note-writing which we all denounce, ridicule, complain of, and practise, and carried on their affairs of love, politeness, and the smaller social services, with a temperate expenditure of stationery and postage, so they condensed their business correspondence; and the heap of letters which is an incident of the everyday existence of everyone who either has, fancies he has, or is supposed by other people to have, anything to do, was an unknown or a very moderate infliction.

The pile of letters which lay on Mr. Eliot Foster's desk was of insignificant dimensions in comparison with that which a London man of the present day would have to encounter on his arrival at chambers; but he had found some difficulty in getting through it, in giving to each communication the attention it demanded; and



when at length the task was ended, he had risen impatiently from his chair—an uncompromising fabric composed of cane and mahogany, constructed, judging from its height, for the accommodation of a giant, and misfitted with the slipperiest leather cushion within the precincts of the Inn — and begun that before-mentioned walk, with bent head, and hands clasped behind his back. Now and then he would unclasp the hands and use one of them to pull nervously at his shirt-frill, or to fumble with the collar of his coat, or to tap the table as he passed it by, or in some other unconscious action, which indicated that something was troubling him, disturbing him, throwing his business mind in business hours out of its business groove, which was very indecorous, distressing, unusual, and unaccountable.

The something which was disturbing Mr. Eliot Foster was held in the hand which he kept behind his back, and was not alarming in appearance. It was only a note, a three-cornered note, written on paper which was dainty then, in a woman's

hand, at once bold and scrawly ; a brief note, which had not been sent through the post, though Mr. Eliot Foster had found it on the top of the pile which had just demanded his reluctant attention. Without any assignment of local habitation to the writer, and with no date but "Thursday," the note, in no other respect vague, contained these words :

*" I must see you to-morrow. Expect me at twelve. If you have business, put it off ; if you have visitors, send them away.*

*" JULIA PEYTON."*

"What an extraordinary woman she is!" so ran the lawyer's thoughts, spoken half aloud, as the hand which he held behind his back shut and opened on the scrap of paper it enclosed. "She never was like anyone else, as I have known to my cost. What is she doing—what is she wanting now? Not to see *me*; no, no! I am not such a fool as to flatter myself with such a delusion as that; she needs my help in something,

and I must give it her ; creditable or discreditable, I cannot say no. And she knows that—ah, yes, she knows that well ! The old peremptory way—the old imperious, wilful, selfish, irresistible way. ‘If you have business, put it off; if you have visitors, send them away.’ Yes, yes; there the true Julia speaks. No mistaking her; girl and woman, she has never changed. She will be here at twelve—it is only twenty minutes past eleven.” Then the trim, prim, cool, hard, sagacious lawyer sighed, and poked the crumpled little letter into his waistcoat-pocket, and forced himself to resume his seat and his inspection of his business correspondence. But it would not do ; the letters fell from his hand ; he pushed them aside, and leaning his elbows on his desk and his face on his clasped hands, gave way to a reverie which, if his unconscious clerks had seen it, would have seriously impaired their estimate of his character. /9

Twelve o’clock, but no sign of the expected visitor. “And yet, as she is coming about her own business, and, I presume, in her own interest, even a woman, and that woman Julia,

might have been expected to be punctual," said Mr. Eliot Foster bitterly, as he looked at his large flat gold watch, to compare "his" time with the loudly-proclaimed opinion of several neighbouring clocks on that subject.

A discreet knock upon the upper panel of the heavy door recalled Mr. Eliot Foster to a sense of the necessity of resuming his business expression. He looked very unlike the man who had so lately been taking a troubled walk about the room, when in reply to his "Come in!" a sandy-haired, freckled, and inky young gentleman presented himself, and said nervously, as if the unaccustomed apparition had frightened him—

"A lady, sir; says it's an appointment."

"Certainly. Show the lady in, Mr. Clithero."

Mr. Clithero retired for a moment, then returned and showed the lady in, after which he carried away with him a vivid impression of his employer, standing still and upright by the table, without having made the usual ceremonious bow which generally ensued on the introduction of a visitor, before the closing of the door.

The "private room" was not a very large apartment, and the distance from the door to the clumsy office-table beside which Mr. Eliot Foster stood was not great—was much too limited, it might have been supposed, for the display of feminine grace of mien and movement; nevertheless, the lady approached him with a step and a gesture which at once indicated her claim to gracefulness. When she stood beside the office-table, she raised the long and thick lace veil which had hidden her face from the inquisitive eyes of the clerks, and then an observer would have discovered what Mr. Eliot Foster knew "to his cost"—that she was beautiful. The lady spoke first, as she gave the lawyer her hand.

"I am a little late," she said, in an unconcerned voice, with a rich full tone in it which harmonised with the strong vitality and the perfect proportion which showed themselves in her face, figure, and expression.

The lawyer replied by a question. "How did you come? I did not hear a carriage."

"I walked here," she answered; "not alone,

though ; I had a very eligible and sufficient escort ; he is waiting for me, improving his mind, in Holborn."

"*He*," commented Mr. Foster quietly, as he placed a chair for the lady, and she seated herself in an attitude which had something insolent in its grace.

"*He*," she returned. Then leaning suddenly forward, she said rapidly,

"Look here, Eliot ; what is the use of your meeting me in this way, and putting on this sort of manner ? I don't believe in it, and it wouldn't have the slightest effect on me if I did. You want to know what has brought me here ; you are unwilling to let me see how much you want to know ; and you are afraid to ask me lest my business should be of a nature of which you could not approve. Then you would inform me of your disapproval, and I should be entirely indifferent to it, as I always have been, and should act precisely as I had intended. I don't come to you for advice, Eliot—yes, yes, you mean by that shake of the head that I have never taken advice from

you or anyone—I come to you for help, and I expect, *I know* you will give it me.”

The voice changed into the softest tone, the large, rather stern eyes, of the indefinite colour which darkens with feeling or the affectation of feeling, and lightens with anger or any evil impulse, smiled gently, confidingly, appealingly, and not in vain.

“God knows I have never refused to help you, Julia; not even when you have been hardest and most unjust and scornful to me. And I did not really expect you to listen to anything I might have to say; but it is a long time now since I have seen you, and I—”

“You thought I might be changed. Ah, Eliot, it would be a bad day for you that should see that change; but no, I am just the same, and I have come to you because there is a chance for me, and you—only you can help me to take advantage of it.”

“A chance for you, Julia! Now what do you mean?” Mr. Eliot Foster rose as he spoke, and leaned against the high narrow chimneypiece, obscuring the cheerless view of a dusty grate, into

which some scraps of paper had found their desultory way. His gaze, now resuming somewhat of its business expression, was earnestly bent upon the beautiful woman who sat within a few feet of him. She had untied her bonnet, and was dangling it by the strings over the arm of her chair, and sometimes his eyes strayed from the face which addressed itself to him to the lissom hand which played impatiently with the bonnet-strings, and seemed by its quick nervous movements to make amends for the forced gentleness and composure of her speech. Her tall figure, her full white throat and clear-cut regal features, the rich shining mass of dark-brown hair, dressed, as was the fashion of the time, in bandeaux, enclosing the small wax-like ears, and gathered into a great smooth knot placed low upon the back of the neck, formed a picture which seemed strangely out of place in the grim lawyer's grimy private room. There was nothing "business-like" about it in appearance, and yet few clients had ever sought private conference with Mr. Eliot Foster on business more important to their interests, or



with a steadier determination to carry it through, than Julia Peyton.

"I mean—I mean—well, of course, you understand, that I *can* only mean the chance of a marriage. What other chance is there, can there be, for me? I cannot bear the life I am leading any longer."

"And yet it seems to me that you might find it very endurable, Julia. Yours is surely the merest sham of dependence. You are your own mistress, and every other person's mistress, at Meriton; your time is your own, or you could not be here; and your position is secure."

"Very secure!" said the lady with a sneer, which contrasted remarkably with the smile she had so lately bestowed upon her hearer; "very secure indeed; only depending upon the whim of a blind old woman, and upon how long I can keep her maid and her butler my friends instead of my enemies. I understand *your* being satisfied that I should remain where I am; but that's not exactly the question, you see, or, if you don't, I must make you see."

"Pray don't," said Mr. Foster, with an evident effort to preserve his calm tone and manner, and a momentary look of pain,—“pray don't refer to me at all. You have always been so explicit concerning *me*, Julia, that I should be a fool to permit any feeling of my own to influence me for a moment; you have told me you do not need, and will not take, any advice; go on now, and tell me what is the help you do need, and have come to ask for.”

The lady looked at the lawyer strangely, with a momentary yearning as of pity in her face, and suddenly put out her hand to him. It was a strong, well-shaped hand, but not small, and it let his hand go as suddenly as it had touched it.

“You are a good man, Eliot,” she said; “too good a man to care about me. However, that is beside the question. I did not come here to talk sentiment, or to listen to it.”

“You will not be asked to listen to it,” said Mr. Foster drily; “I am quite at your service, to give my attention to the business you have come upon, as if you were any other client.”



The faintest possible twitching among the mobile muscles of the lady's mouth testified to some cynical amusement and unbelief on her part ; but she said nothing, and Mr. Foster continued, now with a touch of impatience in his tone :

“ You are not quite so easy, not quite so decided in this matter as you wish to appear, Julia, or you would have told me what it is you want of me before now. You have been ten minutes in this room, and I never knew you to be so slow before in coming to any point. You are hesitating and uncertain ; I am quite ready to hear and to act.”

The look of pain was quite gone from his face, and by a great effort he banished the look of softness, too, and now was all the man of business again.

The lady saw this, and discarding all irresolution, she spoke, “ Are we quite safe from interruption ?”

“ I can secure that we shall be so by a direction to my clerks.”

“ Do so.”

Mr. Eliot Foster gave the necessary order, and resumed his former place and attitude, looking down upon her.

"I have not told you that Mrs. Haviland's son has returned from India, and has been staying at Meriton for some time. In my late letters—few enough and sufficiently far between to protect me from the imputation you once fixed upon me of playing with your feelings, by keeping up unnecessary communications," said the lady, who was then playing with his feelings by every artful device of look, gesture, and intonation within her power—"I did not mention the circumstance. Why? Not to spare you, I assure you. I fear I am not yet good enough, or considerate enough, for anything of that kind; but because there was something of which I was not quite certain. I made up my mind that I would wait, and I have waited, to mention Mrs. Haviland's son to you, until I could tell you what I came here to tell you to-day."

She paused, and they looked at each other. Then Mr. Eliot Foster said with a short nod :

"That Mr. Haviland has fallen in love with you, I presume—has asked you to marry him—that you have said 'Yes'—and that Mr. Haviland is now waiting for you without, improving his mind, as you said just now, in Holborn?"

"Precisely so," said the lady with a slow, secure kind of smile. "But you have omitted one supposition, left one question out of your list; you have not divined that I love him—you have not asked me if I love him."

"What is that to me? *He* has asked the question, and received the answer which you chose to give him. Let that suffice. What need *I* care? But have you quite considered—have you closely calculated all the consequences—all that is implied in such a marriage, Julia—Peyton?"

She laughed, not loudly or scornfully, but gently, with a contented little note, which would have been quite enchanting to any ear that would not have detected something sinister in it.

"You made that little pause, you laid that little emphasis, very skilfully," she said; "but you are wrong in what you are thinking of. I am

not in the least afraid of what I am doing—I am not running any risk which I need mind.”

“Take care, Julia; you are very clever and very daring—as bold as you are beautiful; but all the courage you may truly boast can’t alter facts; and all your skill may not divert danger from you in the future. At first sight this seems too good a thing to be true—too much luck, if I *must* look at it from *your* point of view, to be safe. If I am rightly informed as to the circumstances and position of these people, a marriage with Mr. Haviland must bring a woman very much forward, make her a person to be talked of and inquired about. I think you would very highly appreciate wealth, Julia.”

She laughed again in the same contented tone, and again there was something slightly sinister in the laugh. But she did not interrupt Mr. Foster; she rather liked to hear the arguments she knew, or believed, to be so baseless.

“But you might have that, perhaps, on less dangerous terms—wealth without publicity.”

“He is quite resolved not to admit the idea

that I may possibly love the man I mean to marry. How wonderful is the vanity of the lordly creature!" thought the lady, in calm, unspoken parenthesis.

"In such a marriage as this I see many elements of trouble and inquietude; have you taken them into account?"

"All; and I am resolved upon marrying Mr. Haviland. Why do you not question me about him? Have you no wish to know the man, at least by description, who is to relieve you for the future from all anxiety about me?"

The lawyer's patience gave way before this question—this cool, covertly insolent taunt. His face was dark and angry as he answered her; his hand grasped the thick mahogany back of his office-chair and slightly shook it.

"You are a heartless woman," he said; "heartless, obstinate, and insolent. You are here because you need my help; because, in fact, you cannot do without it. I will ask you such questions as I choose; questions to which I require answers for the sake of your own interests, and

that I may see my way to doing what you require of me. But I will ask you no questions to gratify your love of power—the devilish coquetry that is in you. Be sure of that; and if you are determined thus to trifle with me, and baffle my efforts to get at what you want of me, I see no use in prolonging this interview.”

“You are a little incoherent, Eliot,” said the lady with a smile, which was only sweet and candid this time, not in the least malign. “You will question me as you choose; then I must wait to be questioned; and if I don’t tell you everything quickly and all at once, you’ll turn me out. Is *that* what you mean?”

She might have been the most girlish, the least experienced, the most innocent of women, and not have looked the character to more perfection, so softly complaining, so mildly remonstrating was the glance of the softened eyes, the pout of the rich red lips. Mr. Eliot Foster looked at her and turned away his head.

“You know very well what I mean, Julia. Have done with this. I don’t want to know any-

thing about Mr. Haviland beyond the facts I already know, and those facts lead me to believe this will be a dangerous step for you to take."

"No, no, you are wrong, you are wrong," she said, and resumed in a moment a manner as business-like as his own. "I will tell you the exact state of the case—keeping to facts only—and then you will see. All you heard of the family and household at Meriton before you placed me there was true. Nothing could be more respectable, nothing more comfortable, nothing more dull. The old lady is the gentlest and mildest of old ladies, with the superadded amiability which seems to attach, I don't know why, to blindness. Even when she had her eyesight, I fancy she never by any accident perceived anything which anyone wished to conceal, or formed a suspicion of any human being. By the bye, that quality of her nature may account for her amiability and her placid happiness. We got on splendidly together, if that progressive epithet may be applied to so stationary an existence as ours; and the old lady suffers from only one inquietude—the fear that she

takes up too much of my time, and that I may ever feel myself in any other position in the house than that of an honoured guest. Quite an unnecessary idea, on her part, I need hardly tell you. It was very natural that Mrs. Haviland should talk to me very constantly about her son, and it was equally natural that, never having seen, and not particularly wishing to see, the individual in question, I should not feel much interested in the subject. Mr. Haviland, as you have heard, is one of those fortunate men who went to India young, and made a fortune there in the civil service. He has three sisters, but they are married; and his father and mother had long been living alone, when the death of Mr. Haviland's elder brother—a surly, ill-conditioned old brute, I believe, who had not spoken to any of his relatives for years—put him in possession of the family estate of Meriton. He died within a year, and the old lady, whose sight had long been affected, became blind. I believe the sons-in-law would have been willing enough to come and look after the old lady, and nurse the property until Stephen Haviland's re-

turn from India ; but each was jealous of the other, and the old lady had not the courage to select one of the three, and declare in his favour ; and the heir was a long way off, and so the proposed plan was held in abeyance. . And it ended in your hearing, through Mrs. Burdett, that her mother required a 'lady companion' indefatigable at reading aloud, and a good musician. I am telling you only what you know already ; but it brings me to what you do not know."

"I know nothing of the family politics," interrupted Mr. Eliot Foster ; "Mrs. Burdett's husband is my client."

"Exactly," resumed the lady. "I was some time at Meriton before I knew anything about them ; but I understand them thoroughly now, and if I marry Stephen Haviland, as I intend, I shall require all my knowledge, and all my skill in using it."

"How long has he been in England?" asked Mr. Eliot Foster abruptly.

"Three months. You think I made a rapid conquest ; but it was not so, I assure you. He

was moody and discontented when he came home, perpetually conscious and resentful of his liver, and with a misanthropical kind of notion that all his good luck had come to him too late. But he was very fond of his mother, and very much with her; and it all began, I think, in his feeling grateful to me for cheering up the good old lady's life."

"Yes, yes, I understand," said the lawyer impatiently; "you inspire gratitude now, when a victim awaits you. Formerly you inspired pity."

"Pity!" she repeated with a scornful emphasis on the word; but she let the slighting sentence pass with a wave of her hand, and a glance sufficiently expressive, and continued:

"Well, then, I shall not trouble you with particulars. When his health and spirits improved, and he had time and inclination to think of anything but himself, and look at anything but his medicine-chest, he began to look at and think of me. But I had not had the same distractions, and I had taken to study him before that time

arrived; and one of the first things I observed about Stephen Haviland was a concentrated determination to procure anything which he particularly wished for, without troubling himself about the cost. My perception of this greatly stood me in stead afterwards, and I never allowed it to escape my memory, or slackened in my determination to use it, should Mr. Haviland take it into his head to think his happiness would be increased by becoming my lover."

"Husband, you mean," said the lawyer with a frown.

"Of course I do; but I am not sure that he did, just at first. In fact, I am quite sure he did not; you must remember I have not always associated with such scrupulously honourable people"—here her cheek flushed, and her red nostril heaved—"that the conception of such an idea is an outrage to my sense of dignity. It mattered very little to me what Mr. Haviland intended. What I intended *myself* was the thing for me to consider, and make up my mind about. I considered it, and made up my mind about it; and

the result—I need not trouble you with the particulars—was a proposal of marriage from the gentleman, who by that time would hardly have dared to remember, in his loneliest hours of meditation, that he had ever ventured to hesitate about giving his feelings that uncompromising expression.”

How cold, and hard, and scornful the beautiful face now looked! The lawyer said:

“If I had asked the question you wondered I did not ask, ‘Do you love this man?’ and you had told me in the plainest words that you do not, I could not know it better than I do now. Julia, why are you going to do this thing? What is there to make you give up your present life for such a poor tinsel happiness—at such a risk?”

“Much!” she answered eagerly. “Everything! My present life has become impossible under any circumstances; and no other form of dependence would be endurable to me. In the quiet, in the peace which have come to me of late, I have learned to long for the full, stirring,

enjoyable life, in which all remembrance may be dulled by pleasure, and all *ennui* dissipated by excitement: and that only wealth can give—wealth and station, I mean: I would not care for vulgar riches—and here, now, it is within my reach. Don't say I ought not to have it;—I am young still, and strong, and my soul sickens, my blood stirs against the monotony of my existence. I must get out of it. I never want to look back more. Why should I? I have suffered enough, surely: now it is time for me to enjoy. And I could: O, I could! Every faculty is strong in me, as if I had never known the dark side of life." She had risen as she spoke, and was standing opposite to him, and now she laid her left hand upon his arm. "I would never, never look back: I could keep my thoughts from ever turning to the past for a moment; it should all be washed out for me. Why shouldn't it, Eliot? It was no crime of mine, though it was a fault, I suppose: and no one is bound to suffer always for a fault. If that were so, life would be indeed intolerable. I could utterly forget it all: there's

no one but you to remind me of it, and you would not."

"No," said the lawyer, "I certainly would not; and you could keep out of my way, you know, in case you should apprehend any indiscretion on my part."

"You are just a little too hard upon me," said the lady. "You are too much in earnest for a successful sneer. I pass it by; I don't think of it. I say again, no one can now remind me of the past but you."

"No one, Julia?"

Mr. Eliot Foster's face was very grave and very dark as he put this question. The lady met his glance without confusion, and answered boldly.

"You are doing me a service; you are bringing me near to what I want to say,—*no one*. I am resolved upon this marriage, and I have tried to give you some of my reasons. You say I don't love Stephen Haviland; and I don't pretend to you that I do love him. I don't think it is in me to love any man."

"I don't think it is, indeed, Julia; or any woman, or any child."

"Perhaps not. No matter. So much the more power shall I have over myself all my life; so much the less power shall people have over me. But I like him; his faults do not annoy me, the good that is in him suits me. I shall get on very well with him. He is selfish, but not so selfish as I am; he is strong of will, but not so strong as I am."

"Good heavens, Julia, what has all this to do with the matter in my mind, and in yours also? What does it avail that you like the man you are going to marry, in the face of the tremendous risk you are incurring? I do believe there is not one of you women—even you, the hardest, the most unyielding woman I have ever known—who could resist talking some kind of sentiment, even the perverted kind of sentiment you talk, at the supreme crisis of her existence. Every word you have said of this Stephen Haviland—his selfishness, his determination of character, the fixity of his will—all this makes me more and

more apprehensive for you. Don't mistake me, Julia. Good God, how hard it is to explain to a woman that one may do a disinterested thing in advising her! and all the more disinterested because it appears to spring from a selfish feeling, a vain stupid hope, and exposes one to the misinterpretation of a woman's vanity. I would not have you renounce marriage, I would not shut you out from any compensation, from any good the world could ever have to give you; but this particular marriage seems fraught with peril to you. Think well of it. You are the companion of this man's mother—a young woman taken into the employment of the family on the sole unsupported recommendation of a lawyer employed by a member of the family. And now I must warn you once more; I do not say anything of this because my own credit is in some degree at stake, and will be impugned if your story comes to light. I don't care for that; in this matter I care—as in many another I have cared—only for you. You must incur, from the moment that Mr. Haviland makes his intention of marrying you known

to his mother and sisters, the utmost enmity, opposition, and suspicion on their part; and remember, when it becomes their interest to know all about you, to investigate your antecedents, to call upon me to furnish them with all the information in my power,—which of course, however, I can and will refuse, not counting the cost,—they will apply themselves to the task with sufficient eagerness and acuteness to render it very difficult for me to baffle them; to say nothing of the cross-examination Mr. Haviland will have to submit to, and which he will have a perfect right, in his turn, to transfer to you. Julia, this is very dangerous; far, far more dangerous than if you had schemed in any other direction; than if you had sought a husband anywhere rather than in the house of your employer. It would be much safer for you to have to encounter the questioning of absolute ignorance concerning you, than the false knowledge which supplies a basis on which an edifice of confusion and detection may be at once raised. This is where the danger of this marriage lies, Julia; think of it, consider



it, not as if the warning came from me, but as if it came merely from one conversant with men and life, and giving you the cool-headed caution of such an adviser to avoid the danger of detection."

The lady had listened with quiet and steady attention to the lawyer as he spoke. They were both standing, and she had not taken her hand off his arm. When he ceased speaking, she lifted the hand and laid it on his shoulder. Then looking at him earnestly, and with the colour in her cheeks fading out, she said :

"All you say is true, Eliot—good and true; and I should be a harder and a worse woman than I am if I did not feel it, if I did not recognise that there is nothing but sincerity and disinterestedness in all you say. But no investigation, no pumping of you, no cross-examination of me, can teach Stephen Haviland anything concerning me that he does not already know."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Eliot Foster, starting back; "do you mean to say he knows that—"

“That I am not Julia Peyton, but Julia Wallace; not an orphan girl, obliged by poverty to seek her own livelihood in the home of strangers, but the widow of a felon, and the mother of a convict’s child! Yes, Eliot, he knows all that, as well as you or I know it.”

## CHAPTER II.

### A COMPACT.

THE astonishment with which Mr. Eliot Foster heard the statement just made by the lady was simply, and without any exaggeration, unbounded. It would not have been possible for her to make a communication to him for which he was more utterly unprepared. He did not attempt to disguise his astonishment, or to mitigate its extent. Apparently the lady was prepared to find her words received with surprise; for she merely laughed, in the secure sort of way which seemed habitual to her, when the lawyer started from his listening attitude, and exclaimed:

“Impossible, Julia! you must be deceiving me for some purpose; you cannot mean it. I don’t believe you.”

1

"I cannot help that," she replied. "I can only assert over again what I have already said; Stephen Haviland knows all about me as well as you do."

"Then he must be an extraordinary man! To know what it has been your main object to conceal, and that I have helped you, and that by crooked ways than I ever before walked in, to conceal; and yet to want to—"

"To marry me," she said slowly, seeing that the lawyer paused before the outspoken discourtesy of such a termination to his sentence. "It is strange; and yet you, of all people, ought to find it intelligible, considering that you would not have hesitated to marry me when things were at the worst; and that I don't think"—and here she threw a glance at him full of triumph, and not quite free from derision—"you would hesitate to marry me now, if it could be. There, you need not reproach me with my heartlessness, Eliot; I know all about that; and I am a wretch—only you like the wretch, and forgive her everything, and stick to her through everything;

and the wretch knows well that she never can have such a friend as you."

"Not Mr. Stephen Haviland?" asked the lawyer.

"No; not Mr. Stephen Haviland. You wonder, very naturally, in spite of what I have just said, that he should want to marry me, knowing what he knows; and even if he loved me, cared for me, as you *did*—well, then, as you *do*—it is a strange resolution for a man in his position in life to come to. But he did not come to it until he could not help himself, as I have hinted to you before; and he would not have come to it at all even then, but that there is one thing which he dislikes more than the possible risk of compromising his position; and that is being balked in an inclination. No man was ever more firmly convinced that the whole duty of man is to make life as pleasant and to get as much out of it as possible; and when the object in view is what he considers very desirable, he is reasonably ready to make the inseparable sacrifice to attain it."

"Is this man stupid as well as selfish?"

"I am happy to say he is not. I don't think even *ennui*, even ambition, in short, any motive, could have induced me to undertake the task of marrying a fool. To be for ever trying to accomplish a feat which my common sense would tell me could never be done—what more dreadful fate could one have? No, that is a price at which wealth might indeed be bought too dear. He is bright enough, gentlemanlike, and passionately in love with me. Are you beginning to see any more clearly into the matter?"

"As regards him, I am," replied Mr. Eliot Foster. "It did not require your reminder to make me remember that I am in the same category with Mr. Haviland. You are right; I would have married you when things were at the worst, and I would marry you now, if you would have me." He spoke in a quiet tone, but his face was much troubled. "But, though I understand Mr. Haviland, from your description of him, better than when you first startled me with your strange news, I do not understand *you*. What induced or drove you to tell him the truth? He

knew nothing of you, I presume, until lately, when he saw you, as everyone else saw you, in his mother's house?"

She moved her head assentingly.

"Why then, if you soon formed the project of gratifying your ambition by marrying this man, you did not maintain towards him the position you had assumed towards the rest of the world—why you did not keep him in ignorance of all that you wished to have so strictly concealed,—this is what I cannot understand. Surely the story which was good enough, plausible enough, sufficiently calculated to hold water to do for Mrs. Haviland and her daughters, might have sufficed for her son."

"I have never known you so far out in an argument," answered the lady, leaning forward in her chair and speaking very earnestly. "You are altogether wrong, and your judgment is superficial on this point. A woman must be in error who deceives the man she has made up her mind to marry, if she loves him, because she lays up sure and certain suffering for herself; if she

does not, because she runs the risk, which may any day become a certainty, of providing him with an advantage over her—a weapon to use against her. I speak as if marriage were but an organised strife. And so it is, for the most part; and that side wins which has the most reserves. In this instance, remember, my head and heart were perfectly cool, and I proposed to myself to answer the question asked by Stephen Haviland, by a test. If he cared enough for me, if he was really swayed entirely by his passion for me, the story I had to tell, or to withhold, would not be sufficient to turn him from his purpose; and, once told without any reservation, he could never discover it by accident, and use it against my peace and dignity. If he did not care enough for me, if he was not entirely swayed by his passion,—and I had some reason to rate that sway highly, considering it had driven him to make me an offer which he had not always intended,—he would not use it against me either, for his own sake. We should part, pledged respectively to silence; that would be all about it. I applied the test success-

fully. He did care enough for me—he was sufficiently swayed by his passion for me to persevere in his intention of marrying me, in spite of what I had to tell him.”

“How did he take it?”

She hesitated. A few moments elapsed before she answered :

“Well enough. Even more than well, considering the sort of man he is ; considering that he is not *you*.” She stretched out both her hands, and the lawyer took them in his. Then she bent down her head upon them, in a passing access of tenderness far from common to her haughty and designing nature. When she lifted her head again and looked at him, he was very pale.

“He took a little time to make up his mind. He did not feel much compassion for me, I think, or much sympathy with me ; his kind of love, though it is genuine and strong enough in its way, is not much in the line of feelings of that sort ; and he seemed disposed to resent the circumstances which I told him as an injury to *him*, because they crossed him, rather than because of

*me.* But that is a man's way; and I should never think of minding it, or expecting anything else. But though I suspect he really did try, did make an effort to induce himself to give me up,—I watched him closely, and I don't think I am mistaken about having perceived *that*,—he behaved well when he really had made up his mind. The blood and breeding in him told then; and I am quite satisfied that I shall never have anything to fear from his knowledge of the truth. The policy of taking advantage of a time when a man is in love with one, and prepared to make any or many concessions, and to be ready with all sorts of excuses and palliations for everything, rather than of running the risk of disclosures in a future which can hardly be expected to be quite so enthusiastic and complimentary, is, I think, too plain to admit of dispute. In the case of even an ordinary and trifling secret, I cannot fancy a reasonable woman hesitating between telling it, when circumstances are all for her, and waiting to have it told by her friends, or by accident, when they may be all against her, and when, at

best, she must incur the blame of want of confidence."

"No doubt, no doubt; say no more about it. You argue the point, Julia, with coolness which I cannot imitate. I am not yet sufficiently free from the astonishment you caused me. Right or wrong, wise or foolish, the thing is done; and you cannot undo it now. This man knows all about you, and will use his knowledge in the future as he pleases."

"Not quite," she replied. "Remember, I shall be his wife; and troubling my life would not render his tranquil. He sees that our interests are identical henceforth, and he is determined, and pledged to aid me in maintaining the position I have assumed before the world."

"I wonder how he will treat you?" said the lawyer in an earnest tone; to which she replied with a somewhat jarring levity:

"You had better wonder how I shall treat *him*. Remember, at least, that I start with the immense advantage of not being in the least in love with him, while he is 'desperately,' as people

say—though there is nothing desperate about Stephen Haviland—in love with me.”

“You are just the same as ever, Julia—just the same contradictory creature ; now serious, now gay, now seeming to be touched by some genuine feeling, anon startling by your levity. You trifle with everything, just as you did long ago, before there was anything but trifles in your life, and—”

“And have just the same power of sticking to a purpose now as I had then ; though I am not likely to blunder so egregiously as to whether it is good or bad for me to do so,” answered the lady.

The lawyer shook his head, but said nothing.

“I see you don’t like it, that you are not convinced,” she continued ; “but that will come in time. I knew you would not be, and therefore it was difficult to me to tell you why I have come to you to-day. But my time is drawing to a close, and I must leave you to grow reconciled to this after I am gone.”

“True,” said Mr. Foster ; “and you are per-

fectly indifferent—having made up your mind—as of old, Julia, to my opinion; and you will leave me ‘to grow reconciled,’ and perhaps never care to hear whether that process has accomplished itself. I suppose I shall see nothing, and hear little, of you now. Mr. Haviland’s wife will never need the services of a poor lawyer.”

“Won’t she? And what brought me here to-day? Did I not tell you that I came to claim a service at your hands? and have I not said all I have been saying in order to introduce the subject of this service? Eliot, you have a right to think hard things of me, and to say them to me, but you have not quite the right to tell me that I have come here merely to take an airy, well-satisfied, heartless leave of my best friend; for that is what your words imply.”

“Never mind what my words imply. Perhaps you *do* really need one service more from your ‘best friend.’ Tell me what it is at once; there is no use in wasting time in further preparation.”

He had risen from his chair, and he now

moved away from her in the direction of the nearest window, and stood there, leaning his elbow on the top of the rusty wire half-blind. His face was half averted. She seemed relieved by the change, and did not seek him with her eyes as she spoke, but allowed them to follow the idle movement of her hand, as she played with a paper-knife lying upon the office-table.

“I will come to the chapter of our arrangements, then. For carrying them out, I am forced to depend very much on you. It was not difficult to induce Mrs. Haviland to come up to town; the plea of her son’s convenience did that easily, as the plea of his pleasure would have done it, and we have been here three days. To-morrow Stephen Haviland means to tell his mother that he is going to marry me, and that the marriage is to be private. After it is over he will inform his sisters of the truth.”

“How does he expect *them* to take it? Judging of what I know of Mrs. Burdett, I fancy she will not receive the intimation with much pleasure or patience.”

“So he thinks; but he means to make very short work of it with her—indeed, with all his sisters. It appears to me that they think the fact of his being their brother—rich, and still young, and having come home from India unmarried—constitutes a kind of right to his money on their part, and entitles them to resent his marriage, with no matter whom. Stephen does not think that my being their mother’s companion, and a ‘tocherless lass,’ without even the ‘lang pedigree,’ would make much difference. The grand cause of offence would be his marrying anyone, and so diverting his money, his feelings, and his influence from what they choose to consider their ‘legitimate’ channels. He means to announce his marriage to them respectively, with an intimation that if they please to treat me in all respects as he chooses I should be treated, there shall be no change in his relations with them; but if they do not so please, they must consider themselves strangers to him for evermore. I only know Mrs. Burdett by report, and I am inclined to think she will make a wise

and prudent calculation, to the effect that in the case of her taking her brother's advice, she may probably make something handsome by her obedience; whereas, in the case of her rejecting it, she loses certain benefits which no doubt derive more alluring colours from their very uncertainty; and she will therefore decide on behaving well to me. The family complications having been arranged in this manner, the world outside the family will not, I fancy, be very hard to manage. Stephen Haviland is rich enough, and well enough placed, and his antecedents are sufficiently vague, as he has had no London 'seasons,' and never has been talked of with Miss So-and-so, or Lady Somebody Something, to present to society a wife of his own choosing. Of course, there will be *some* gossip; that is to be expected; and people will eagerly declare that I am a nobody, which is perfectly true. But a few will be found to remark that my name—*Peyton*' (the emphasis she laid upon the word, and the expression of her face as she uttered it, were in the highest degree malignant and scornful)—“is

not a bad one; and the American origin I shall have whispered about, will add to its respectability. I do not feel much afraid of being snubbed; and if I am, it won't last. I want to know, to feel, to enjoy, now while I am still young, and while the power to forget and to enjoy is still strong and buoyant within me,—it is, Eliot—you may look and be astonished—*it is*,—the life of the gay, grand world, whose pleasure is a recognised part of existence; where there are no sordid cares, no anxieties; where my well-being will be the care of others; and where the everyday incidents of struggling life will have no effect upon me. You never considered the uncertainty of my position, I daresay; but I know all about it. I am no better than any other dependent in Mrs. Haviland's house; and I have no wish to extend my experiences in that direction. However, that is only the negative side of the matter; the positive side is, that I want to get all the enjoyment I can out of life while I am young enough for it to have any meaning; and that is to be done by becoming Stephen Haviland's wife."

"Have you considered the difficulties, of a technical nature, which will present themselves?" asked the lawyer. "Have you been advised—but of course you have not, as you have come to me only, and the matter has not been mentioned between us—that you cannot marry this man under a false name, and giving a description of yourself which is not true? You cannot be married to this man as 'Julia Peyton, spinster.'"

"I know that," she said; "and Stephen Haviland has provided for that difficulty. We are to be married quite privately and quietly in a city church, by special license; and it is most unlikely that any of his family—learning the fact of the marriage only after it has taken place, and that his mother sanctioned it by her presence—will ask any embarrassing questions. You will remember that we have only her ears to fear, not her eyes; the Christian names alone are used in the ceremony, and she cannot see the register."

"Yes," said the lawyer, "this is a clever plan. I don't know, however, that I should quite

like the notion of inducing a blind woman to attend a marriage in order to profit by her affliction after such a fashion."

"Indeed!" she answered, and the fierce flash of her eyes, the tremble in her voice, told of the uncontrolled temper aroused within the woman; "perhaps there *are* circumstances under which you would not be so scrupulous."

"Pray don't waste your time in losing your temper with *me*, Julia," said Mr. Eliot Foster, in a tone in which the subtle senses of the hearer instantly detected something like the first faint approaches of disgust—a fatal sentiment which she loved power too well to tolerate, and which caused her to surmount her anger by a strong effort. "Go on, and tell me your plans, and how I can advance them. It is a clever trick to make the mother witness her son's marriage with a person of whose existence she is unaware; I acknowledge the cleverness. Is not that admission enough for you?"

"I must make it enough. But you are hard on me, Eliot; you do not make allowance for my

position; your own is so secure, and you are a man; you have no power of understanding how I feel."

"You might have shared my position, Julia, such as it is; you might have been as secure as I; but you would not—the bait was not sufficiently tempting. You are indeed going to sell yourself for money; but it is for a great deal of money, and the best worth having of the things which money can buy. That makes all the difference. I can quite see that."

"It is fortunate I shall not require him to do many more services for me," said the lady in her thoughts; "for I am losing him; the tide has been long at the full, it is beginning to ebb."

"But," he continued, "this is idle talk indeed, and all I shall take by it is that you will say it comes of jealousy. And perhaps it does, Julia; though I think my days of love and jealousy are alike over. Once more, what are your further plans? and how am I to help you? You don't want me to witness your marriage, I presume. I am not blind; and your future hus-

band's family, considering I sent you among them, would have a decided right to resent such a proceeding on my part."

"I don't wish you to be present at my marriage; the service I have to ask of you is a far more important one. I have been in hopes you would say something which would make it easier for me to tell you its nature—that you would, in some way, lead up to it."

While she spoke she was taking out of her pocket a note-book, which in those days would have been accounted very handsome, but which we should regard as only a clumsy affair. While Mr. Eliot Foster watched her proceedings with much surprise, she took from the pocket-book several new crisp bank-notes, laid them on the table beside her, smoothed them out carefully, and then, resting her folded hands upon them, she said, without looking at the listener :

"Can you not guess for what purpose this money is intended? Can you not guess why I have brought it here?"

"No," said Mr. Foster; "I cannot. I hope,

I believe, I cannot. I will not permit myself to believe that it can be to—”

“To repay you the money you expended upon me, you would say? Certainly not. Any such thing is far from my thoughts; I am incapable of supposing you would accept another man’s money to replace that. But there is a great, a fatal obstacle to my marriage, which may be removed with your assistance, and by means of money. It is for this purpose I am here, and have brought this.”

The lawyer took two or three steps away from the window and towards her, bent his head and looked her full and earnestly in the face.

“Julia, do you—can you possibly—mean the child?”

“Yes,” she answered abruptly, and leaned back in her chair with a half-sigh of relief, “I do. You can understand without my explaining it, that the child is the *bête noire* of my existence under all circumstances, and the stumbling-block in my way under the present especially. All can be gotten over, put out of sight, and beyond reach

of discovery, if the child can be disposed of, if he can be entirely separated from me, and if the fact that he lives, can be hidden from the world for the future, as it has been from the Haviland family up to the present time. This can be accomplished by means of money, and you must do it. Stephen Haviland and I have discussed the matter fully, and he has given me full discretion and plenty of money. The child need never want for anything. He will probably, considering the blood there is in his veins, turn out badly, but that will not be our affair; he will have a fairer chance than many with very different antecedents."

It would be difficult to do justice in words to the tone in which Mr. Eliot Foster's visitor spoke. It was not indifferent, it was rather disdainful and cold, and yet eager; but the coldness and disdain were for the object of the proposed arrangement, the eagerness was for the carrying of it out, for the attainment of the speaker's own set purpose. The lawyer kept a fixed gaze upon her, and she felt it. One might have seen the effort she made

to rally against its influence, and present an unmoved front to it.

“And you have quite made up your mind, Julia? You can bear to part with the child, to put a blank hopeless separation between you and him for ever? I did not think this of you. I would not have believed it, had anyone in the world told me this of you; and I can hardly believe it, told me by yourself.”

“Why?” she said, and the red angry flush rose once more in her face. “Why should you doubt it? Because it is unnatural, you would say. Is it? Not according to the cant of the world, you know, but according to the reason of reasonable beings, is it unnatural? I think not. I never liked the child; I never felt one throb of a mother’s love for him. Remember the circumstances of his birth; remember all it cost me, and don’t talk such trash to me. To hide him away, to ignore his existence, to forget it if I could—have not these been the objects of all my efforts, and have not you aided me in them? And now, because there is a positive and important purpose

in doing this more completely, more utterly, more effectually, you take fright, you start back from me, and you answer me with the cant of 'unnatural'! Is it unnatural that I should consent, in consideration of a prosperous future for all my life, to do that which I did consent to do for the splendid certainty of a dull and respectable home, and one hundred pounds a-year? If there is any good in me, you know it; and what harm there is, you also know: none so well. I am of a hard nature, and I might not have loved the child even had I been like other women—a proud and happy mother. But I cannot tell: speculation upon that point is useless. I only know that his birth brought me new misery and degradation, in addition to misery and degradation which were deep enough already, Heaven knows. I only saw the child to part with him, and then for a long time; every hour made me more and more conscious of the calamity of his existence. I could hardly even pity the poor child born to such a lot, so much had I to pity myself for. I never pretended to be anything but selfish; the strength

that is in me has its origin in that. You know what the child has been to me since—a burden on my mind, a drag upon my slender means (though you have helped me in that too), a constant reminder of degradation, terror, disgrace, flight, misery, of a nameless skulking life, the utter waste and desolation of years—on the rare occasions when I saw him, a face in which to see the reflection of one I abhorred, a disposition in which I could only expect to find traces of a nature of which I could not think without a shudder. I daresay you are shocked; I daresay I am saying rather terrible things for a mother; but they are true, Eliot, horribly true, and I can never think otherwise.”

“Do you mean to say,” the lawyer asked, “that you feel you can never have any natural affection for this poor child? that he is always to be an object of repulsion, in consequence of the fault of another? I cannot believe that you feel this. That such a strange perversity came to you at his birth, that you did not cling to the child born in sorrow as your best buckler against

sorrow (I have seen women in such trouble as yours, ay, just the same, who loved their children with a double intensity because of it), did not surprise me much; for you are not like other women in many things, and this is one of them. But that you should feel as you now do is inexplicable to me; that you should be ready to throw your child over completely—for, if I understand you rightly, this is what you mean to do—I am very, very loth to believe.”

“Why?” she asked with genuine calmness, and a perfect air of reason; “why? I don’t do badly for him in thus doing well for myself. I never could have given him, had I kept him with me, and loved him and worked for him, like the most model of mothers, what he can now have by means of this money. What chance could he have had with me,” she said bitterly, “which cannot be trebled by the money he will have away from me? You cannot deny or gainsay this, Eliot; you may look as grim and as displeased as you like, but I am telling the hard, worldly truth, *and you know it.*”

She glanced impatiently at him, but there was no change, no softening in his averted face. Then the passion in her broke loose, and had its way in one fierce burst of emotion. She rose suddenly, and struck the table with her hand. "I will not bear this," she said. "I came here for your help, and I was honest with you. I told you from the first I would not ask your opinion or take your advice, and I won't; but neither will I endure your calm passing of judgment upon me thus."

She stood now confronting him, her dark flashing eyes forcing his to meet them, and her lips trembling with the vehemence of her speech. She looked beautiful, and fierce, and ominous—just as he had seen her look many times, and had felt on each occasion that she laid the spell of her beauty more and more securely upon him. He knew it was a spell, and of malign magic too; yet he could not fight against it. But this was not so to-day; there was something at work in the lawyer's honest heart which rebelled against this woman in the aspect of her character now

presented to him. She was right—the tide was beginning to turn. While she was speaking and he was listening, his mind was divided between apprehension lest the vehemence of her tone—which, though it never reached unladylike loudness, overpassed the strictly private and confidential measure of sound—should reach the presumably curious ears of the clerks in the outer room, and regret that he had ever mixed himself up in this affair. To himself there could have been no clearer indication of the waning of her power than this regret; nor would she have failed to recognise or hesitated to avow it to herself, had she been able to discern its existence. The light was dawning for this passion-blinded man, and the glare of day was very unfavourable to the idol, which he had known for a false god always, but believed all the same to be a beautiful and inspiring image. When a man says to himself, at first impatiently, and then seriously and coolly, “I am sorry I ever mixed myself up with this affair,” or, “I was deuced unlucky to have anything to say to her,” which phrases are

characteristic of two manners of men,—the reign of the woman of whom there is then question is very near its close. She had better abdicate gracefully.

“I am not passing judgment on you,” said the lawyer, as, with a warning gesture, he pointed to the door of communication. “But you tell me this determination of yours, which seems terrible to me; and you get angry when I imitate your own frankness.”

“I get angry! Yes, I do get angry, and no wonder, when you talk of me and my purposes as though I were like other people. I tell you, I only wonder that I do not hate the child instead of feeling indifferent, as I do.”

“Are you quite sure you *do not* hate him, Julia? This compact of yours with Mr. Haviland looks rather like it.”

“No,” she said, “I don’t hate him; but I don’t say I might not if I did not get rid of him. I could not answer for the effect of having him before my eyes if he had been the means of destroying my prospect of independence and enjoy-

ment. But we have had enough of this. You are making up your mind to refuse me your help; so be it. I must only find other means; much less creditable ones, of course." She gathered up the notes as she spoke, and looked as if she intended to go away.

"Stay, Julia," said the lawyer, laying his hand heavily upon her arm; "you are not accustomed to let your temper get the better of your discretion; do not let it betray you now. Tell me exactly what it is that you and Mr. Haviland propose should be done with respect to the child, and what share you want me to take in the doing of it. I will trouble you with no more comment."

"Will you do what I want?" she asked him, with an irresistible glance of mingled entreaty and command. "You know that I talk utter nonsense when I speak of any help but yours. Where, and from whom, should I seek it? I have not been able, I daresay, to make you understand Stephen Haviland. Our marriage is a bargain, in which I must punctually pay my

share. A portion of that share is this arrangement to be made with you. I am to give you this money—one thousand pounds—to be used at your absolute discretion, and to entreat of you to make the best arrangement in your power for the child.”

“Very well, Julia,” replied Mr. Eliot Foster; “I will do this; but, in my turn, I have a proposition to make to you. You propose to yourself an entire separation from your child. I ask you to let that separation be perfect, as regards his future, in every sense. You will not suffer from it, seeing that you have the strength to institute it; but he may, if he knows that he has a living mother, who has no love or care for him. There, there, you need not repeat your argument about this being the best thing you could do for him. I remember all that; keep to facts. If the boy begins life with this fruitful source of bitterness in him, he will probably develop rapidly the evil which you believe to exist in his disposition; but if he has no notion of the fact, if he believes himself an orphan, with no

ties and no external aid to look for, he will at least start fair,—a sorry start, but not a false one. Will you, then, agree that he is to know nothing of you—whether you know anything of him is within your own province to decide—and undertake never to communicate to him the facts of his own origin, and your history, directly or indirectly?”

“You have asked me the question I was about to put to you. You have anticipated all I thought and intended,” replied the lady. “I do indeed agree to this.”

“You have considered it well; you know that you are resigning the one indissoluble tie which this life owns, and renouncing all the consolation for the future which your child might bring you, in getting rid of the present embarrassment?”

“I know, I know; but it is more than embarrassment—it is utter defeat, it is ruin. O Eliot, do believe me; do not question me any more; keep your promise: this is the last time.”

“I am not so sure of that, Julia. The last time in which people get into trouble in this

world, the last time in which they require the aid of their friends, is a very vague and uncertain period. I am by no means sure it has come for you."

He took the bank-notes from her gravely, counted them, locked them away in a safe, and wrote a formal receipt for the money; all in silence. The lady watched him with an anxious face.

"Take care of that," he said, as he handed her the receipt; "there is nothing compromising nor explanatory in the form of it. And now tell me your address. I shall communicate with you in a few days."

She gave him an address, which he made a note of. Then an awkward pause ensued, which he did not make any attempt to break. At length the lady said, less with her former manner than with an attempt at it—

"I don't know how to thank you, Eliot; but you have secured the happiness of my life."

"I am sorry to be obliged to believe you," the lawyer replied, with so much gravity that it

oppressed her. "I think there is nothing more to be said to-day."

"I am dismissed, it appears," said the lady; and she moved towards the door, the manner of her exit forming a marked contrast to that of her entrance. Mr. Eliot Foster opened the door of communication, and called Mr. Clithero, whom he requested to show the lady downstairs. Then he and she bowed gravely to each other, and she went away, having dropped the heavy veil which had before hidden her from the inquisitive eyes of the clerks. Mr. Eliot Foster did not close the door immediately.

"Has anyone called, Mr. Russell?" he asked of a younger colleague of Mr. Clithero.

"Yes, sir, two gentlemen; but they will call again. And these letters have come."

"Thank you. Show anyone in who comes."

Mr. Eliot Foster sat down in his clumsy office-chair, and read the newly-arrived letters—one carelessly; the other, which had a country post-mark, very attentively. Then he thought deeply for some minutes, and muttered, "Yes, that will

do ; I see my way to it all now." Then the lawyer tore the note signed "Julia Peyton" into the smallest fragments, threw them into his waste-paper basket, and concentrated his attention upon the despatch of his business. He saw, and discussed affairs with, many clients that day ; and not one of them but might have believed his own interests the one absorbing topic of the solicitor's thoughts. Which is merely saying that Mr. Eliot Foster was a good man of business.

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In a quiet little green nook, receding in a triangular shape from the border of a wide flat road, in a district of the county of Essex which lay tolerably close to London, though not so close in those days as now, stood a low flat-looking cottage, which had a clean though poor appearance, and was tenanted by a woman to whom a similar description might apply. She was a tall, pale, prim, sad-looking woman, who wore decent but painfully unadorned mourning always, and who had probably never in her life conceived the idea of doing anything because she felt the need of

amusement—the impulse to depart from the even and unexciting tenor of her way. Though there was little difference except in point of size between the cottage which Mrs. Wood occupied and those in which the villagers lived, and though her dress was but a shade better in point of material than theirs, the observer must have been superficial indeed who would have included her in the same category with her neighbours. She was plain, unattractive, with nothing graceful or prosperous about her, but she was no common woman; and seeing this, the observer would also have seen that the isolation of her life in such a place, and with such surroundings, must have been complete. It was complete, but she was satisfied it should be so; she needed no companion but her little daughter; and asked for no better friend, though she seldom saw him, than her dead husband's cousin, Mr. Eliot Foster, a busy and prosperous London lawyer, but who found time to visit her sometimes, and had sympathy with her troubles and anxieties always. Mrs. Wood was poor and proud, sad but contented; a woman who had done with her life

so far as its individual aspect was concerned, and was exclusively occupied with her child. Narrow-minded but kind-hearted, very ignorant of the world, but in a vague kind of way distrustful of it, she lived with her pretty little girl—a blue-eyed, fair-haired little creature of four years old—for her sole care and her only delight; and said with perfect truth, when Mr. Foster questioned her, that she needed nothing more.

About a week after Mr. Eliot Foster had received the letter and the visit which had so affected him, an unaccustomed movement and air of expectation began to make themselves evident at Lane Cottage, as Mrs. Wood's little dwelling was popularly called. The door was set open, and the voices of the mother and child, and of the strong country girl who "helped" in the household, were audible, as the little girl ran to and fro between the low porch and the green gate in all the restlessness of childish impatience. Occasionally the mother's tall figure would appear at the door, but only for a moment, as a glance sufficed to assure her the expected visitor was not yet in sight. The

child had gone through the various stages of impatience — had watched, listened, run about, whimpered, fallen asleep, wakened up again, complained of being hungry, eaten, taken to watching again, and was about to grow very tired for the second time, when a plain neat carriage turned the corner of the wide lane, and approached the gate of Mrs. Wood's cottage. A tolerably large trunk was hauled down from the carriage with the aid of the servant, who had run out of the house at the delighted summons of the little girl; and Mr. Eliot Foster descended from the vehicle and approached the house, leading by the hand a child of rather more than Alice Wood's age. The little girl, who had scampered off to her mother, now made her appearance in the doorway, holding tightly by Mrs. Wood's gown; and as Mr. Foster greeted his cousin's wife kindly, the two children looked narrowly at one another—the boy with a face which expressed nothing but curiosity, except discontent; the girl with a smile, beautiful even beyond the ordinary beauty of the smiles of childhood.

“I have brought you a little companion, Alice,” said Mr. Eliot Foster; “take him away and show him all your playthings; I want to talk to your mother.”

The conversation was a long and serious one. We need repeat but a brief portion of it.

“You told me he is an orphan,” said Mrs. Wood, “but you did not mention his name.”

“His name is Henry Hurst,” replied Mr. Foster.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE HAVILANDS.

THE Havilands were a handsome family. The fact was not merely indisputable, but generally admitted. The first thing anybody not previously acquainted with the family collectively, or with the individual members of it, was sure to say on seeing them together, or seeing one of them anywhere, was, "what handsome people!" or, "what a handsome person!" as the case might be. That no other family ever had been so handsome, and that it was not in the nature of things that any family yet to be developed in the unknown future ever should be so handsome, was a portion of the Haviland creed, fixed, immutable, sublimely beyond doubt or discussion, like every other matter on which it pleased them to make up their minds. It was, perhaps, a fortunate circumstance that

they had undivided convictions on these points, for they were not remarkable for concord ; and their mutual admiration contributed materially to the existence of such good feeling as did, after a gusty and uncertain fashion, prevail among them.

The Havilands were tall ; therefore shortness of stature was not only incompatible with beauty, it became a deformity. Talk of a short person to, or in the presence of, a Haviland, and, if the short person were otherwise of any social importance, the Haviland would reply in a tone of polite deprecatory commiseration. But if the individual in question were of no social importance whatever—in which case the bad taste of the introduction of such an individual into polite conversation at all, would be hinted in look and tone—the Haviland would reply with undisguised contempt.

The Havilands had bright complexions ;—therefore, to venture the expression of an opinion that beauty could co-exist with the absence of pink cheeks and very red lips in the hearing of a Haviland, was to expose yourself to scorn and

contumely. "Perhaps you had a partiality for ghouls," it would be surmised; or, "really, they had very bad taste, no doubt, but they never could see the charms of pasty-faces;"—for the female members of the family especially were obtuse persons, utterly devoid of any sense of humour, and who mistook broad assertion for decision of judgment, and blunt contradiction for noble candour, incapable of dissimulation. The Havilands had straight noses, abundant dark hair, small sharp white teeth, and neat little heads, which found favour in the eyes of hairdressers, and from a phrenological point of view were calculated to inspire despair;—therefore, any irregularity of feature, any impertinent protrusion of forehead, or departure from the Haviland outline of nose, any deviation into blonde or auburn hair, was something, if not quite sinful, at least extremely lamentable, in the eyes of the Havilands. If it were insinuated that persons existed who admired such deplorable irregularities, the remark would excite no sentiment of conviction, and it would depend entirely upon the mood of the hearers

whether it did or did not receive the flattest possible contradiction in the rudest possible tone.

The Havilands were not merely a handsome family, but they regarded their beauty in the light of a peculiar and special merit, and were entirely unvisited by any suspicion that their intellectual superiority to their neighbours was less distinctly marked. If, indeed, they did not believe themselves to be not only the handsomest but the cleverest people in the world, they certainly did not “draw the line at” any of their own acquaintance, or short of distinguished celebrities in politics, literature, and the arts. Though thus satisfactorily convinced of their own intellectual superiority, they were not people who, in the abstract, thought much of talent. Of course they had it—they were Havilands—just as they had in each of their houses a pair of globes and a medicine-chest, because it was proper, and a matter of course, not that they understood the use of either;—but they regarded it as very well for people who were obliged “to exert themselves;” and they naturally entertained some contempt for

such persons, and were haunted with a doubt whether they were perfectly respectable.

For though the wealth which had, if possible, elevated the Havilands in their own estimation, had been but recently imported into the family history by Stephen Haviland's succession to his uncle's property, and the marriage of two of his sisters with rich men, they had always been moderately well off, and quite removed from the category of families whose members were condemned "to exert themselves." Female members, of course;—there was no infraction of the dignity of the Havilands in the men entering the learned professions, or obtaining the best come-at-able Government or other situations, as in the case of Stephen Haviland; but no female of the name had ever "helped herself" to any profession except matrimony, or condescended to exercise any art or industry for the gratification or the service of any human being—a circumstance which was a legitimate source of pride and contentment.

The personal beauty and the most marked

characteristics of the Havilands were derived from the late Mr. Haviland, whom his son and his three daughters closely resembled. Their mother—a gentle, kindly, intensely affectionate, submissive little woman—was as unlike her children as she well could be, and would have stood a very good chance of being more or less despised by those superior beings, but for an accidental advantage which had great weight with them. She was well born, and very “well connected.” Even the Havilands admitted that it was just within the reach of possibility that Miss Standish might have made a better match, of course in point of money, considering her position, than she had made in marrying Mr. Haviland; and as their mother’s connections were necessarily their own, and could not help themselves, they thought a good deal about them, and were in the habit of mentioning them rather frequently.

Mrs. Haviland happened to be a favourite with certain of the most influential of the connections, and they did her not a few solid kindnesses in an unassuming manner; among others, the pro-

curing for her son, at a very early age, the appointment in India, which he had turned to such good account. That sort of thing was to be done in those days, and Stephen Haviland did it. He had the quality and quantity of ability which enabled him to secure and foster his own interests with steady assiduity; circumstances favoured him to a remarkable extent, and his mother's connections had no reason to regret having used their interest in so legitimate a direction—a result which does not invariably ensue from the exercise of family influence.

Mrs. Haviland loved her son with the pride and devotedness common to mothers; but if the exact truth could have been ascertained about the gentle old lady's sentiments, it might have appeared that she rather admired than loved her daughters, and that her self-congratulations on the undoubtedly felicitous fact that they were all three "married off," were intensified by the sense of freedom which their having departed to adorn other homes, by their beauty, graces, and virtues, left her to enjoy. The old lady, with all her

gentleness, was not devoid of character, though she lacked the noble energy of self-assertion which distinguished the real Havilands; and she had given evidence of that in her spirited, though wordless, resistance to the overtures of her three daughters and their three husbands, when her blindness rendered it necessary for her to have a companion, which had astonished the Havilands and herself. Her success in this instance had given her fresh courage, and had brisked up her spirits to a point from which they had not since fallen. She had escaped the constant society of all or any of her "incomparable girls;" she had secured the society of a very charming and superior person, who was a stranger to them;—the old lady did not confess, even to herself, how much this circumstance had to do with her comfort;—and Stephen was coming home.

Yes, that was the great point,—Stephen was coming home. Mrs. Haviland had been very quiet about it, as was her way, and no one but God and herself knew how she felt. She had borne the calamity of her blindness, which had

come upon her slowly, by almost imperceptible and painless degrees, with great patience, until the good news reached her. When she knew that her son, a rich man, with a good position in society ready for him, was coming home in the prime of life, after a creditable career, with all the means, and with unimpaired powers of enjoyment, and that she should never see his face again,—then the full sense of the intensity and the immensity of the calamity that had befallen her, came suddenly to her, and the patient woman, who had borne good and evil fortune with submissive meekness, fell into a passion of helpless grief. It could not be, surely it could not be, that others should see his face, and she never more. What was that face to anyone in all the world in comparison with what it was to her?

When his sisters said they should be so glad to see Stephen again, she felt angry. What was their gladness to hers? and she was not to see him, never to see him! There was a miniature of him, painted when he was a boy, and it had never been, in all the years of his absence, out

to thought. She had become accustomed to her infirmity now, and could move about in her own house, where all the surroundings were familiar, without assistance, and even occupy herself in many ways. There she knew the place by heart; and when seated by the open window of her own room, her face turned to the wooded landscape, feeling the perfumed air which came to her by way of the flower-garden she had long delighted in, she could see it all with her mind, and be satisfied.

The change of the seasons brought her pictures, fresh, yet familiar; and the wondering, helpless uncertainty, the bewildering strangeness, so painful a feature of her misfortune, had not yet troubled her very sorely. But now she was in a strange place, whose sounds were unfamiliar, where they did not guide, but confused her, where old recollections availed her nothing, and new impressions could not come to her; where knowledge was centred in the little space she occupied, and bounded by the limit she could touch with her finger-tips; where she heard

strange voices, disembodied, it seemed to her, for they linked themselves to no association of face or form.

She had not the extraordinary sensitiveness of touch, the power of divination by the fingers, which is often the compensating gift of blindness, and she was almost frightened at the vague pain she suffered. In her patient, silent fashion, she tried to reason it away, to subdue it; but it was the offspring of the nerves, not of the understanding, and it was not to be reasoned with. At home, she was, by her own wish, much alone: solitude pleased her; here it frightened her—she realised it. But she would not weakly yield to the unaccustomed feeling. Surely she, to whom all places must in reality be alike henceforth, ought to gain the mastery over herself, and to secure—in the rule of her own mind, in the power of thought, and of self-communing, uninterrupted from without—the bitter-sweet of this great affliction.

She would not summon her maid, she would get over this thrill of great loneliness in a little

at carelessness ; “and you don’t say whether you are glad or sorry. Perhaps you think I ought to have told you before I made up my mind.”

“No, Stephen,” the old lady replied in a low voice, “I don’t mean that; but this has come suddenly, and it is a kind of shock. Of course, I have often thought it would be some time or other, but—but—” and here the mother’s hard-fought-for composure gave way, and she sank back in her chair and wept. Stephen Haviland, calm and undemonstrative as he was, felt the keenest pang at his heart that had ever visited it as he went on hurriedly, now kneeling by his mother’s chair with his arm round her slender form.

“I know, I know,” he said ; “you must not fear that this or anything will separate me from you. Indeed, you will see how much the opposite it will be, for the lady I am going to marry is Miss Peyton.”

“Miss Peyton !” said Mrs. Haviland faintly.

“Yes, mother. I love her, and I am determined to marry her. I don’t think you, to whom

she has been so kind, so devoted, can have anything to say against her."

"I have nothing to say against her, my dear. If you love her, and if she will be a good wife to you and make you happy, I am satisfied; but there is much to be thought of, Stephen. A man's marriage is an awfully important event in his life, and—"

"Yes, yes," he interrupted, "I know all that; don't think me inconsiderate and abrupt. I have thought of all that people, whose business it is not, will say about it. I don't care what they say. I care only for *your* opinion, for *your* approval." He pressed her hands strongly, then rose from her side, and strode almost fiercely up and down the room. "You do not know—you cannot see, unfortunately—how beautiful she is; but you know how good and clever, how true a lady, and how well-fitted for a far higher station than I can give her. The first thing I loved her for—yes, indeed, mother, before ever I loved her beautiful face—was her care of you, her gentleness and tenderness to you. Your own daughters

The interval which elapsed between Stephen Haviland's leaving the room where his mother was and his returning to it, accompanied by Julia Peyton, was short, but there had been time in it for many a keen pang and heavy heart-throb in Mrs. Haviland's breast. She could not see the graceful figure, the beautiful face, flushed with success, with triumph, and also with a softer, a better feeling; she could not see the look of passionate admiration with which her son watched every movement of the woman who had so enthralled him, as Julia swiftly approached. Her own figure did not lack dignity, nor her sightless face pathos, nor her trembling voice sweetness, as she rose when she felt that Julia was beside her, and taking her hands in hers, drew her face down, and kissed her.

"Stephen tells me you are to be his wife, my dear," she said; "henceforth you are my daughter."

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"I never really knew how much I loved you, Julia, until this day," said Stephen Haviland to

his affianced bride that evening. They were alone. Mrs. Haviland had retired immediately after dinner, and her son had since detailed to Julia all the particulars of his brief interview with her. He had related them frankly, with the candour of a selfish man, and had added many complacent congratulations of himself and his hearer, on the ease with which their difficulties had been surmounted, and the assent which his mother had yielded to their request that she would be present at their marriage. Mrs. Haviland had, indeed, yielded easily. The first surprise, the first keen pain, had been so overpowering to her, that she did not mind the rest; she had been very acquiescent, very incurious. If such a mode of marriage suited Stephen's convenience, and was not repulsive to Stephen's taste, so let it be; she had no care, no consideration but for him. Her timid mention of his sisters had been sternly met, and she had said no more.

There was a dreary change, and it had passed on everything. Could it be possible that this was her own boy, of whom she felt so much afraid?

much. The versatility of moods which characterised her bearing towards others, marked her solitary hours also, though her whimsical humour never practically traversed her fixity of purpose. Amid the conflicting mental processes with which she closed that eventful day in her life, was one redeeming compact which this strange woman made with herself; perhaps with some occult, unadmitted reference to that other compact of the morning.

“Whatever comes of this,” she said, half aloud, “to him or to me—whether triumph or disappointment, whether good or evil—I will make it well for his mother. The good old lady shall not have called me ‘daughter’ in vain. I am not grateful, as Eliot told me; perhaps I can be to *her* if I try; and I will try. Her old age shall be happy and peaceful, if any effort of mine can make it so.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### STRATEGIC MOVEMENTS.

WHEN Julia Peyton replied to Mr. Eliot Foster's inquiry whether Stephen Haviland was stupid, that she was happy to say he was not, she said not only what she thought, but what really was the case. The obtuseness which had already annoyed her more than once, and was not unlikely to weary her in the future, was of the feelings rather than of intellect. When anything occupied his mind, when he had succeeded in any undertaking of his own, he was apt to be so much engrossed by the subject, so much elated by the success, that he had little power or inclination to speculate upon, or to feel how the same matter might affect others. He was deficient in sympathy, not in brains—a deficiency which was characteristic of his sisters as well,

phen. If they don't take this well—and we must not expect them to be quite pleased—will you promise me to have patience and not quarrel with them, and to induce Julia" (she called her Julia now, quite naturally) "to pass it over?"

"I will promise you, mother, that if a quarrel arises between my sisters and me, it shall not be my fault. I mean to make them aware of my marriage in my own time and my own way; don't trouble yourself about that."

This was not the kind of assurance, nor was it given in the tone, for which the mother wished; but she was forced to be content with it. Julia Peyton would have recognised the success of the efforts she had made to win the heart and the confidence of Mrs. Haviland, if she could have known that she checked the sense of disappointment which her son's cold reply caused her by saying to herself: "I will talk to *her* about it; it will be safe in *her* hands."

Thus Julia had proposed to herself to make two conquests in the Haviland family, and had effected them both.

No communication had yet reached Julia Peyton from Mr. Eliot Foster. This did not disturb or distress her. She had absolute faith in his promise, though she had not forgotten, nor had reflection upon it lessened the impression which she had derived from her interview with him. The revelation she had made to him, the service she had required at his hands, had shaken a devotion which had hitherto resisted everything,—her own indifference, her careless ingratitude, an exhibition of her faults so full, so free, so entirely undisguised, as to be almost exaggerated. If she had real occasion, time, and opportunity, she could, she supposed, resume her empire; but nothing seemed so improbable at present as that she should ever require or wish to do so. But he would keep his word; she need not fear any failure there. She had been absent from the drawing-room awhile, leaving the mother and son alone, and was returning to them when, as she passed the top of a staircase, a waiter accosted her.

“Here is a letter for you, ma’am,” he said; “just come by hand.”

She did see it;—amid a torrent of passionate exclamations, with her pink cheeks assuming a very unbecoming depth of colour, and the bright dark Haviland eyes much more expressive than was their wont, her anger divided between the intelligence which excited it, and the “monstrous insensibility” which her husband showed to such “horrible news;”—Mrs. Burdett read and re-read the following letter :

“Brighton, Tuesday.

“MY DEAR BURDETT,—*I am sure you will agree with me that family discussions are seldom wise, and generally lead to family quarrels. I should deeply regret an instance of the latter arising amongst us, and therefore I have thought it best to avoid the former. I shall be very glad to receive the congratulations of my relatives upon my marriage with Miss Peyton, which it is the purport of this letter to announce to you ; but I did not require their expressions, and it was in accordance with my own wishes and those of my wife that our marriage was a very quiet affair. My mother accompanied Miss*

*Peyton to town, and was present at our marriage. She was not very strong, and naturally a little nervous, so she acted on our advice, did not make her visit to London known to anybody, and returned to Meriton immediately after our marriage. We are at Brighton for the present, but shall soon return to Meriton, as my wife is anxious to be absent from my mother for as short a time as possible. I am aware that my sisters have not yet had the pleasure of making my wife's acquaintance. When we are settled, and our plans for the autumn are finally arranged, I have no doubt Julia will be very happy to see Selina and yourself at Meriton. I am about to write to Fanshaw and Marsh; the latter is still, I suppose, at Naples. Give my love to Selina and the children.*

*"Yours very sincerely,*

*"STEPHEN HAVILAND."*

It might reasonably have appeared surprising to anyone who did not know Mr. Burdett, and who was also unacquainted with the peculiarities of the Haviland temper, and the system for its

management which, after much experience and thought and many experimental essays, that remarkably sensible man had finally adopted, that he had taken such a letter so calmly. But he knew thoroughly what he was about: he understood his wife, and he understood Stephen Haviland almost as well as Julia Peyton did. Even the circumstance that the address given by his brother-in-law was only the vague one, "Brighton," was not lost on him. "Haviland would rather not quarrel with Selina," he thought, "and so he does not give her the chance of writing to him until her temper has had time to cool. He is more obstinate, if not so violent as she is, and if they quarrel I fancy it would be no easy matter to make it up. If Selina can only be made to understand that it really is no business of hers, and that she must get the worst of it if she attempts to interfere, all may be right; if not—" And Mr. Burdett left a blank space in his thoughts, which, if he had been speaking instead of thinking, would have been represented by whistling.

In the mean time Solina was pouring out the vials of her wrath upon her brother and the "wretched minx" who had "taken him in;" upon her husband's solicitor for having recommended the "designing wretch" to the family; upon her husband for having applied to Mr. Eliot Foster for the recommendation; upon her mother for having allowed herself to be "cajoled and bullied"—Mrs. Burdett was not free from incoherence of ideas and of speech when she was what she called "ruffled"—and upon herself for having had no suspicion of what was going on, and left Meriton so long unvisited. Her husband privately regarded the latter omission as peculiarly fortunate, and listened in patience until the angry lady declared her intention of immediately letting her brother know what she thought of his atrocious conduct, and how irrevocably he had disgraced himself, and also of giving her mother "a piece of her mind." At this point he interposed.

"You cannot write to Stephen until he gets back to Meriton, my dear," he said; "he has

given you no address. As for writing to your mother, I really think you had better be careful. It is not wise to let servants know more than one can avoid of family affairs, and you must remember your mother cannot read your letter. Whatever you say, her maid must know it."

Mrs. Burdett flashed an angry glance at her troublesome husband. He was so disgustingly sensible, so repulsively right. If she could only have scoffed at his caution ; but she was not quite such a fool as to do that.

"Then I'll go—" she said in a loud, angry tone.

"To Meriton? Surely not, my dear. I think you cannot mean it seriously. You cannot go to your brother's house with any intention of hostility to the mistress of it. It is no longer your mother's house, remember ; you cannot put yourself into so false a position."

Mrs. Burdett sat suddenly down with an iracund plump, and tears of vehement anger started into her eyes.

"Do you mean to say, then," she said, "that

I am to put up with this vile business quietly? Do you mean to say that I am to put up with Stephen's insolent letter and his low wretch of a wife; that I am to acknowledge a creature who came from nobody knows where, and belongs to nobody knows who, and was no better than my mother's servant? Thank you, Frank; I have a little more self-respect than all that comes to. But perhaps you approve of the disgusting transaction?" Here Mrs. Burdett's tears gathered copiously, and she fairly sobbed. The unjustly-accused Frank was rather glad to see the tears. He was in the habit of thinking irreverently on similar occasions that they were a good sign—a kind of rain that laid the dust and quieted the storm. At all events, his wife could not cry and talk volubly at the same time, and he might now have a chance of a hearing. So he took up a position on that vantage-ground of domestic oratory, the hearthrug, and drawing the obnoxious letter gently out of his wife's hands, he said, glancing at it occasionally as he went on—

"I dislike this unfortunate marriage as much as you do, my dear, but I never expected that Stephen would remain unmarried, as I think you did; and indeed, considering India and all that, I am surprised he was not picked up in a more objectionable manner long ago. But as to your putting up with your brother's marriage, I don't think it's a case for discussion of that kind. You cannot undo it, and you could not have prevented it had you known all about it."

"I don't know *that*," said Mrs. Burdett, with a particularly angry and defiant sob.

"But I think I *do*," continued her husband mildly. "I am perfectly certain the only effect any interference with Stephen would have produced would have been a quarrel, leaving no hope of reconciliation; and if anything is said or done now which he does not like, it will come to the same thing, and the upshot will be that all his own relatives will be estranged from him, and this lady's power, which must be pretty strong already, more firmly established than ever. You surely must see that, Selina?"

Mrs. Burdett continued to sob, and did not answer. But she was listening, which was quite as much as her husband expected.

"It is very unfortunate and very lamentable," he went on, "but it is just one of those things which can only be made worse by meddling with them. Believe me, it would be foolish in the extreme to quarrel with Stephen—playing into his wife's hands, in fact, as I dare say she would be quite as well pleased if he saw nothing of us. The thing is done, my dear, and we must make the best of it."

"I should like to know what all our friends will say," said Mrs. Burdett—and this sudden diversion assured her husband that, though the correctness of his judgment would never be admitted in words, he had succeeded in convincing her—"at all events she can never hope to get into society."

"Perhaps. I don't know; that depends on herself, and in a great measure on us."

"*On us!* Why, what *can* you mean?" said Mrs. Burdett, looking very much as if she were

about to fly at the speaker, and tear the answer from him by main force.

"I mean, my dear," he answered deliberately, "that if you are a wise woman you will act sensibly in this lamentable family affair, and not take your friends into your confidence. Half the things which get talked about to the injury of people, are talked of first by themselves; curiosity is taken for granted when, in nine instances out of ten, it is not felt. Let us apply this, which is certainly my experience, to our own case, and I think you will see that the very best and wisest thing you can do is to say as little as possible about your brother's marriage in any sense derogatory to your brother's wife. So much, common sense will dictate to you; and beyond that, what do you know of this Miss Peyton which could fairly be urged against her?"

"What do I know? Everything. She is a nobody. You must be mad, Frank, or else merely bent on annoying me."

"You know quite well I am bent on nothing of the sort. What I am bent on is trying to make

you at least wait, and consider this matter well, before you do anything which will compromise you with Stephen and with other people. I don't think you know anything more about Miss Peyton than what Foster told us about her, except that she has been very satisfactory to your mother as a companion. Do you?"

"No, I don't," said Selina with rude curtness, and a jerk of her chin.

"I thought so. Now, let us go over exactly what we do know about her. She is the daughter of a merchant who was unfortunate in business in the later years of his life, and who left his widow and his only daughter very ill off. Her father was an American by birth, and of good family among the Republicans. Peyton is an excellent name out there, and the widow and daughter were about to go to New York to seek a home with their relatives there, having none in this country, when the mother was taken ill and died. Foster had had business relations with old Peyton, and the girl applied to him for assistance and advice. I had just before been to see him, and told him about

your mother,—the difficulty of getting her properly taken care of, and so on,—and he recommended Miss Peyton for the situation of her companion. It was unfortunate that you were not able to see her at the time, though I don't suppose you would have had the foresight to have rejected her on account of her beauty."

"I don't know anything about her beauty," said Mrs. Burdett snappishly. "Pray do you?"

"No, no; only Foster said casually at the time, that she was very handsome," replied Mr. Burdett, with somewhat guilty confusion.

"Indeed! And you never thought of mentioning that at the time; how very odd!" The lady laughed an unpleasant laugh, while she actually trembled with anger. "And no doubt, just like a man, you thought that a wonderful recommendation."

"No, indeed, my dear," said Mr. Burdett, who began to fear that the Haviland temper, diverted from the delinquencies of Stephen, was coming rather too much in his direction, "I did not; only one feels more for a handsome young

woman, totally unprotected, and obliged to make her own way in the world ; and—”

“Does one, indeed !” interrupted Selina, with a vehemence which warned Frank that he was only increasing his difficulties. “Quite the contrary, *I* should say ; there are plenty of people ready to protect such interesting creatures. And when Stephen came to town, he said nothing about my mother’s companion being such a beauty.”

“No, he certainly did not ; perhaps, however, especially as things have turned out since, he thought the more. But all this has nothing to do with what we are talking of. I have just gone over all we know about Miss Peyton, and there is clearly nothing disgraceful in it, nothing which makes it impossible or unreasonable for us to do the wise thing in this business—say as little as possible about Stephen’s marriage, and if questions are asked, answer them as much as possible to her advantage, distinctly remembering that that means to our own.”

Mrs. Burdett sat in sulky silence for a little

while after her husband ceased to speak. She was angry with him for the reasonable, the indisputable truth of all he had said; she was angry because she felt, for her own sake, she must act upon the opinions which he supported by unanswerable arguments. She might, indeed, enjoy the luxury of indulging her temper, denouncing her brother, decrying his wife, and exercising her imagination in the invention of such facts as she did not know; but she had too clear a perception of the price of this luxury to seriously contemplate its purchase. Her husband was right—a detestable truth, and not of rare occurrence. To yield with a good grace was not in Mrs. Burdett's nature; but she yielded with a bad grace, and her husband was satisfied. He did not expect more, and he frequently had to be satisfied with less.

“Then what do you think I had better do?” she asked, in a tone of voice which ingeniously combined sullenness, victimisation, and a hint that the unlucky Frank was the chief culprit after all.

“I think you had better wait until you hear

from your mother or from Stephen that he has returned to Meriton, and then write a civil letter, and leave future proceedings to chance. You see there's a week before you either need or can do anything."

"Well, I suppose I must do as you say; I suppose I should have no peace of my life if I did not." This was a sublime effort of fancy, as Mr. Burdett felt,—the peace of any Haviland life being singularly independent of other people;—but he had as good a temper as he had sound sense, and he did not permit himself the risky comment of a smile. "But if you flatter yourself that Fanny and Maria will be schooled by *their* husbands in putting up with this quietly, you will find yourself very much mistaken."

Mr. Burdett did venture to smile now, but his irate wife did not perceive that he gave himself that indulgence, as he had gone to the breakfast-table, and helped himself to a cup of tea. His face was quite sufficiently grave for the decencies of the occasion, as he said:

"I cannot form any opinion of what Fanny

and Maria are likely to do ; but if they have anything like your good sense they will follow your wise example. As to being 'schooled' by Marsh and Fanshaw, I don't know. I couldn't fancy Fanshaw schooling anything but a horse, or Marsh equal to even that noble effort."

"Really, Frank, you are becoming quite witty. Edward Marsh may not be a genius, but he makes his wife very happy. I am sure her letter" (this was the mercilessly-crossed foreign epistle before mentioned) "is quite delightful to read."

"Is it? I am glad to hear it, I am sure. I must go now, Symondton expects me in town to-day ; and, Selina, I strongly advise you to take the initiative in this matter. You are the first to know of your brother's marriage ; well—" (for she had looked an interruption) "the Fanshaws don't count, in comparison with you, so far as influencing the Marshes is concerned ; and I am sure it depends on you whether this miserable business comes right or not ; of course, I mean as right as it *can* come. Suppose you write to Fanny, and make the best of it. She has not

your good sense, you know, your clearness of perception, and your knowledge of what I call the science of society, and you must make up in this instance for her deficiencies. If you can only command your own feelings sufficiently to do this, you will do a very clever and politic thing, and you will put your brother, over whom you have no power whatever in any other direction (pray remember that), under an immediate obligation to you."

Mrs. Burdett liked to be thought clever and politic. She did not dislike this cunningly-put suggestion; but if the insidious Frank played his game skilfully, and to her ultimate defeat, however she apprehended the issue, she had no notion of throwing up her hand. So she turned her shoulder towards him, begged he would not trouble her with farther advice in a matter which it was impossible he could understand as well as she did, and preserved a steadfastly sullen and averted face, which not even the Haviland beauty could redeem from being intensely disagreeable.

But the insensible Frank did not mind this. He was quite satisfied with the reception of the suggestion he had made, and went off to his dog-cart—after a cursory visit to the nursery, where he cautioned the authorities not to let Mrs. Burdett be “worried” during the day, because she was “rather poorly,” a free translation whose original they perfectly understood—with a jaunty step and in a contented frame of mind.

Mr. Burdett was not much attached to his brother-in-law, and the part he had just played was dictated less by regard for Stephen Haviland than by self-interest. But he was a sensible, practical man of the world, a great deal cleverer than the “superior people” with whom his marriage had allied him, and he had seen at a glance that a “horrible mess,” as he said to himself, would be made of this affair if it were left to the unassisted management of Haviland talent and Haviland temper.

“Selina is safe to take my hints,” he thought as he drove briskly along the London road from his pretty little place at Leytonstone, “and she’ll

tell me about her letter to Fanny as a profound device of her own in a day or two. What a fool Haviland is! I don't know that, though, if *she* is as handsome and as clever as Foster reported her. When I've done with Symondton I'll look in on Foster. I wonder if he knows of this business."

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Peyton had enjoyed the rare advantage, during the time she had lived at Meriton as Mrs. Haviland's companion, of being popular with the servants. Her distant and dignified demeanour had not, strange to say, been imputed to "stuck-upishness," nor had the domestic *junta* decreed that the companion was to be made feel that she was no better than themselves. This was fortunate, for all her strength of mind and will would have failed to protect her against a combination of such irresistible force as "the greatest plagues in life" can always effect when they please. Nevertheless, although she had enjoyed exceptional popularity, her coming back to Meriton in the capacity of mistress of the establishment had certain disagreeable aspects, which Stephen, who

was sensitively alive to such things, did not fail to discern.

“Suppose we dismiss all the servants, with the exception of my mother’s maid?” he had suggested to Julia.

“I cannot think it would be judicious to do so,” she replied. “They have behaved perfectly well to me, and if we dismiss them all without cause, it will be the surest way to convince them that you are ashamed of what you have done, and anxious to get rid of everyone who knows the fact of my former position; which would be a very foolish, as well as a very unworthy, motive to have imputed to you.”

Stephen looked, and felt, rather frightened. He could not have asserted, with entire adherence to the truth, that some such feeling as that which his wife had just put into words had not, in a dim, unacknowledged kind of way, suggested itself to him; but he was wise enough to recognise Julia’s superior wisdom in this respect, and to acquiesce in her decision. The habit of acquiescence was forming itself in the mind of the

happy bridegroom with a facility and celerity which would have surprised those acquainted with certain qualities possessed by the Havilands, which they were accustomed to designate "firmness," and "self-respect," but which other people held to be stolid obstinacy, and almost unendurable self-conceit. This was not merely one result of his being, as Julia had said, "desperately in love" with her (for him), and therefore disposed to yield to the influence of her intellectual superiority, but it also had an origin which those who have observed men of Stephen Haviland's disposition will readily recognise. Their obstinacy and self-will become very burdensome to them at times, and they are not indisposed to let themselves be ruled by one individual, provided he or she—but especially she—is judicious in government, and rules with an appearance of concession. If she has anything less intractable than a downright fool to deal with, any woman who is not herself a fool may have a good deal of her own way by asking advice, and suggesting its nature, on subjects on which she has thoroughly made up

her mind. Mrs. Stephen Haviland knew this, and was a woman calculated to act upon the knowledge with judgment, skill, and success. As yet, Frank Burdett and his brother-in-law's wife were strangers to one another; but already there existed a principle of attraction between them destined to become active in time. Each had married a Haviland, and neither was unconscious of what was implied by that distinction, and included in that enterprise.

Steady to her interpretation of her position, and the nature of the task which lay before her in arranging her future according to the plan of life which she proposed to herself, Julia would not assent to anything which bore the least appearance of compromise. She would return to Meriton as its mistress, and take her proper place, utterly regardless of her supposed, as of her real, antecedents. "Society" and the servants should alike recognise her, and acknowledge that she was not unduly elevated by her marriage; that the bargain, if they chose to regard it in that light, was not an unequal one. But there should be no

pretence, no compromise. The one great deceit, deliberately undertaken, must suffice. Julia Haviland was perfectly capable of carrying out that large and necessary lie; but her pride, her taste, and her worldly wisdom would alike have revolted from the petty precautions against possible snubs which Stephen Haviland would have been inclined to adopt.

“You had better wonder how I shall treat *him*,” Julia had answered, when Mr. Eliot Foster had expressed anxiety about Stephen Haviland’s future conduct to her. There was a similar sort of defiant self-reliance in all her thoughts and speculations concerning the time that was to come after her marriage. It was not the consideration of how she should be received and accepted by the world which occupied her, so much as that of how she should feel it politic or pleasant to comport herself in her new social and family relations. Julia had no speculations about the conduct of other people, and no doubt or hesitation about her own.

The fortnight to which the absence from

Meriton of the bride and bridegroom was limited passed happily to both. A honeymoon commenced without illusions is less likely to culminate in regret than if the contracting parties are really in the enthusiastic and highly-imaginative state of mind supposed to be "the correct thing" on such occasions. The unintentional deceptions of courtship are not so rudely betrayed, and sentiment is not so violently routed by reason. In the case of Stephen Haviland and his bride, the enthusiasm was all on the right, that is, the husband's, part, and there was no element in the very cordial liking with which she regarded Stephen to obscure her judgment or divert her intention of acquiring from the first a steady and controlling influence over him.

Stephen Haviland's letter to his sister was entirely his own doing. Julia had experienced no uneasiness, expressed no wish, on the subject. She had understood his intentions as regarded his sisters, as she had explained to Mr. Eliot Foster, and she was content. She knew Stephen well enough to feel certain that he would make his

sovereign will and pleasure known, in his own way, to any rash being, always excepting herself, who should venture to dispute them, and she did not allude to his sisters in any way. The letter was his own composition, and he felt rather proud of it. He would never give in to his sisters, at all events, he thought, with the self-congratulation of an obstinate man in his determination to have his own way, and in the vague perception that his wife was likely to "influence" him very strongly—a perception which immediately made a double allowance of the famous Haviland "firmness" indispensable to the proper balancing of his account with himself.

The time passed at Brighton had a strange effect on Julia Haviland's mind. It was the first occasion in her life in which leisure, luxury, and security were combined. She was now a rich man's wife, quite safe in the future, and, as far as the keenest and most apprehensive calculations which could be made in human affairs were to be relied upon, she was equally secure from the past. As she strolled arm-in-arm with her husband on

the shingly beach, or galloped over the downs, her mind was filled with a succession of pictures, deliberately summoned up, looked at, and put by for ever. She had such painful and degrading recollections associated with a seaside place, that she could not have selected any locality better calculated to make her feel and enjoy to the utmost the change which had come over her life—the turn of fate which had put her destiny now, for good or evil, into her own hands once more, and freed her from the stain and shame of vicious and debasing contact. Sometimes she was stirred for a moment by an impulse of gratitude towards the man to whom she owed the contrast her new life presented to the old; but that impulse was evanescent. She would put it down by the promptings of her predominant common sense, which told her that Stephen Haviland's love had more of self than of devotion in it. She judged him harshly, as she judged everyone, herself included; and when the woman's heart within her softened into something which might have become a full response to the feeling with which he re-

garded her, she checked the tendency by assuring herself that he made such sacrifices as his marriage implied and necessitated, not for her sake, but for his own.

“He would not make a great sacrifice in which my feelings only were concerned,” she would say to herself in her moods of musing; “I know that. I am sure, if I am ever weak enough to trust and try him in that direction, he will fail me. What man would not? Not one, *now*, I believe.”

The emphatic *now* in her thoughts had reference to Mr. Eliot Foster; she had not lost the sense of discomfiture to a certain extent, not as regarded his actions, but as regarded her former dominion over his feelings, with which she had left him on the occasion of their memorable interview, and which had undoubtedly served to increase the cynicism which had become the habitual tone of her mind, without, however, affecting her manners.

But Stephen Haviland did not discern the taint of unbelief and callousness in the mind of

his beautiful wife. He loved her as much as he could love; he admired her enthusiastically. Her strength of character had infinite attraction for him; her talents, her vivacity, which did not exhale in flirtation, like the vivacity of the dreary women whom he had met and loathed in India, where he had steadily resisted the manœuvres of the young ladies sent out to official brothers on speculation of a matrimonial character, and when their chances had become desperate at home. How different she was from the dreadful girls he remembered with a shudder, who always wanted to borrow his horses, and did their best to induce him to buy themselves! This beautiful, graceful, accomplished woman had an unpleasant secret in her life, it was true, but it was the secret of a great misfortune, of sorrow brought to her, of wrong wrought to her, by the wickedness of another. There were none of the dirty little trickeries, the petty meannesses and lies, the sickening affectations and pretences of the female "Europe" consignments which had made him sceptical about women for a time, and had prepared him to

admire the frank audacious honesty with which Julia had told him her story, and set their relations on a footing of uncompromising truth. He thought of her with pride in comparison with the young ladies who sagaciously brought "out" wedding-dresses and orange-blossoms (of a hardy character, appropriately artificial) among their outfit, who knew they were expected to recoup the family expenditure on their behalf without delay, and who unhesitatingly married men of whom they knew nothing (except the amount they were entitled to draw in rupees per mensem), without any reference to their character, health, or previous domestic arrangements. Never mind about a short allowance of lungs, and a great deal too much liver,—never mind "station" scandal about Mrs. So-and-so, and the necessity of stopping other people's tongues by lending one's own to the vilest perjury,—the pay is the thing; and the pension,—but particularly the pension. Having experiences and reminiscences of this kind concerning women in his peculiarly tenacious and rather slow mind, Stephen Haviland not only ad-

mired his wife positively but relatively ; and the outspoken truthfulness of her dealing with him proved, as she had anticipated, the soundest possible policy.

The terms of the bargain had been stated and discussed with such perfect fairness that it never occurred to Stephen to remember, when it was concluded, that he had bought this beautiful woman,—that is, that she would not have married him if he had not been a rich man ; she was so candid that he practically deceived himself. She realised his ideal ; she was, in all respects in which he comprehended her, exactly like the woman whom he had pictured to his imagination, since his boyish visions had given way to a more real estimate of woman, and of a man's chances of happiness in marriage. This he accepted as an article of his domestic creed ; but it is just as likely that his observation of Julia during the period which she had described to Mr. Eliot Foster, previous to his making up his mind that he would marry her if she would consent, had determined his ideal.

That Stephen Haviland did not realise his wife's ideal is easily explained. She had none. The early disenchantment, succeeded by terrible material calamity, disgrace, perplexity, and privation, which had laid her life waste, had cured her of that sort of thing for ever. She was not a woman to be deceived twice; far more emphatically, she was not a woman to deceive herself twice. Her satisfaction in the success of her plans was great, so far. She found it easier to "get on" with Stephen than she had expected. She perfectly understood her own qualities and her own defects as a companion. She was charming, but she was not sociable. She liked solitude, when it was voluntary, not enforced, and was fitful in her humour as women are who have more mind than the majority of their fellows, and whom life has tried severely before the terrible power of suffering which youth possesses has been mercifully modified. She fully intended, and confidently expected, to enjoy society, which had hitherto been only a name, a something within the reach of those who were more fortunate than she was,—

but she had no intention of being interfered with or controlled in the disposition of her time. She meant to devote much of it to Stephen's mother, but she would have, in doing so, the delightful consciousness of free will, which was precious to a woman of her disposition. She had gained a position in the world, she had become a personage. She had all the disposition possible to use her new power and facilities for the happiness and welfare of all concerned; but she did not hide from herself the fact that she highly prized the consciousness that she might do so or not just as she chose, that it was no longer her business but her pleasure to please.

Stephen Haviland proved a much more agreeable and a much less exacting companion than his wife had expected, considering the desultory way in which he had gone about at Meriton. She would not have been surprised, nor would she have been very impatient, if he had been somewhat of a bore, for she was reasonable, and had had experience in calculating the probabilities of life, and she did not expect to get all she had

played for for nothing, or even at the price which she had already paid. She was not prepared to find the time which custom consecrates to utter solitude for the newly-married people of the polite world, and which has been known occasionally to result in a good deal of mutual weariness and discontent, pass so quickly and so pleasantly.

There is an authentic anecdote in existence which sets forth that a certain bride returned to her father's house, which was situated in a populous neighbourhood, within a fortnight of the day on which this particular Angelina had made her Edwin the happiest of men, and that she evinced the liveliest satisfaction on finding herself once more "within reach of human beings." On a sympathising friend's remarking that "she had tired very soon of the Cumberland lakes," the ingenuous bride replied, "I should think so, indeed! Such a horrid place, my dear, you have no idea; and not a soul to speak to but Edwin: I should have been moped to death in another week."

A fortnight had elapsed since the marriage of

Julia Peyton, and she certainly was not in any danger of being moped to death. The doubt and distrust, which the hard and harrowing circumstances of her life had rendered habitual to her, were largely modified when she began her preparations for her return to Meriton in her novel character, and she felt, if her former life could have been annihilated or undone, and her youth of heart restored, she could have loved her husband instead of only "liking him very much."

In the mean time agencies on which she could not have reckoned were at work to assure the success and the perfection of Julia Peyton's designs. Her triumph was complete when, a few days after she returned to Meriton as its mistress, her husband showed her with undisguised pleasure, (in which she perceived a proof of anxiety which he had never avowed,) a letter from Mrs. Burdett, which conveyed her congratulations in terms which, if not warm, were unobjectionably correct, and refrained from all comment on the manner of the marriage.

"Now," thought Mrs. Stephen Haviland, "the

day is really won. I shall be as popular with all his people as I shall be powerful with him. Any enmity would have been something to spoil the completeness of my life. It's irritating to dislike anyone and to know that anyone dislikes you. The other sisters will follow Mrs. Burdett's lead;—of course it's her sensible husband's, by the bye. Eliot has a great notion of *him*, I know. And now I shall swallow pleasure and life—*life* in its true meaning—as a freed prisoner gulps down the fresh air."

Julia Peyton

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hours, and found him walking up and down between the narrow windows. "It isn't money that's bothering him—lucky for *him*. Shouldn't I like to have *his* balance!" and here Mr. Clithero, who had not the remotest knowledge of the condition of Mr. Eliot Foster's affairs, whistled with a sage emphasis which induced his fellow-clerks to look at him anxiously, and enviously to suppose old Foster was taking him into his confidence, which was just as probable as his taking him into partnership. Mr. Clithero's powers of observation were not altogether at fault in this instance. Mr. Eliot Foster had something bothering him, and that something was not money, at least it was not his own money. He was uneasy in his mind, unsatisfied in his conscience, and vexed with himself; a very unusual combination of sensations for the calm and self-possessed lawyer.

He had duly received an intimation that Julia Peyton's marriage was an accomplished fact, but he knew no more; he had no knowledge of the spirit in which Stephen Haviland's family had received the intelligence, or whether the strong-

mined plan she had unfolded to him for the management of the Havilands had achieved even an instalment of success. He found it difficult to realise the truth; to picture to himself Julia Peyton married, in an independent position, raised above the exigencies and vicissitudes which had marked her life ever since he had an opportunity of watching its troubled and turbulent course. It was difficult, inexplicably painful to him, though there never had been "hope," as the phrase is, in his love of the haughty, capricious, ambitious, unmanageable woman, who had had the power to force him to sin against his own self-respect as no other human being had ever forced or beguiled him into sinning. Still, she had been of such moment, of such meaning, in his life, that he could not grow speedily reconciled to the knowledge that there was an end of that. She had valued him, certainly, for what he had been worth to her; but that was over. He had told her he had no faith in her having reached the termination of her troubles, and of the services he could render her; but in his heart he felt that her boast

was well founded—felt it with keen mortification, and then was ashamed of himself for feeling it at all. “She is a woman who must succeed, if she only chooses to try,” he thought, pondering his own weakness in attempted self-exculpation, “in making either a fool or a slave of any man. I wonder which she makes of Haviland; probably both.” The yoke she had laid upon Mr. Eliot Foster was one which did not weigh lightly, and was not easily cast off. She had shaken it, and loosened it not a little indeed, in their last interview, but his neck was still bent under it.

It was not that he grudged her elevation, her escape into a higher and brighter atmosphere than that in which his life—which, in such unfrequent moods as his present, he was wont to designate, in the strict privacy of his meditations, as “rusty”—was passed. No, he was glad to know that she was henceforth to possess all she set so high a price upon. He wondered a little at her standard of value; but that was all. “I have nothing to do but forget her now,” he thought; “she has got all she wanted from me.”

He would have been glad if that process of forgetting had inaugurated itself more decisively and progressed more speedily; he was tired of thinking and wondering about her, and the image of the disowned, forsaken child presented itself to the lawyer's mind with unpleasant pertinacity. "Not but he is better with poor Mary, in any case; she is dull and narrow, but she is a good woman, and will do her duty by him conscientiously. Still, it is such an unnatural thing, such an unwomanly thing;—one cannot blame Haviland much, of course, when she was willing to do it; but she would never have had such a proposition made to her by *me*." And then Mr. Eliot Foster, the last man whom any-one would have suspected of the exercise of his imagination in a sentimental direction, fell into a reverie;—picturing to himself the life on which Julia Peyton had entered, and that which he had offered her and she had refused, from which he was aroused by the entrance of Mr. Clithero, who laid some letters on the table, and announced Mr. Burdett.

"How are you, Foster?" said Mr. Burdett heartily; "you're not looking quite so right as usual. Very busy, eh?"

"Not at all busy, just now," said Mr. Eliot Foster, shaking hands with his esteemed client. "Quite at your service. What can I do for you? Anything in the Donnington affair?"

"No, thank you," said Mr. Burdett, settling himself comfortably in the round-backed chair, which had such various occupants in its time. "I haven't come to you, in fact, on business at all, at least not on law business. I thought, as I had a little time to spare, I would just drop in and ask you something about this marriage."

"Marriage?" said Mr. Eliot Foster interrogatively.

"Yes, Stephen Haviland's—my wife's brother, you know. I suppose you have heard of it, haven't you? A deuced unpleasant business for us all, I can tell you. No offence to your friend, Foster; but you cannot wonder that we don't like Haviland's marrying Miss Peyton."

"Ah, yes, *that* marriage," said Mr. Foster, evading the question of offence to his friend. "I know—yes, I *heard* of it—in fact from the lady herself."

Mr. Eliot Foster rose, and arranged some of the protruding scraps of paper in the grate with the toe of his boot.

"He's taking it coolly, considering he sent the woman into the house," thought Mr. Burdett; but as he saw that the lawyer had no intention of speaking again until he had spoken, he resumed:

"Mrs. Burdett does not like it, and her sisters will be of her opinion; but, as I tell her, it can't be helped, and we must all make the best of it. Don't you think so, Foster?"

"Of course I think so; what else could any sensible person think?" returned Mr. Eliot Foster. "I was not at all surprised at the circumstance myself. Miss Peyton is very handsome and very accomplished; and I think I understood that Mr. Haviland has not long returned from India. I rather wonder his sisters did not anticipate such a result from his meeting such a person as Miss

Peyton under such circumstances ; it certainly did not surprise me."

"Very likely ; but then, you see, they did not know what Miss Peyton was like, and they did not particularly care ; and they certainly will be savage. I can answer for Mrs. Burdett's feelings."

"If you can answer for Mrs. Burdett's conduct, it will be more to the purpose," said Mr. Eliot Foster coolly ; "I know nothing of Mr. Haviland, and I have not heard much ; but I fancy, from what I have heard, that he will not be much affected by any remonstrances, especially as they must come too late."

"No, by Jove," said Mr. Burdett, with a strongly confirmatory nod of the head ; "Haviland's as stubborn as a mule, and as proud as the devil ; and I am rather glad he said nothing till the thing was done ; for if he had, it would have been impossible to keep the women quiet, and an unpleasant and unwise family quarrel must have been the result. If they can be kept from putting their wrath upon paper now, all may

be well, and for my part, since Haviland was such a fool as to marry at all, I don't see why he shouldn't marry to please himself instead of other people. But I thought I would just ask you, as Mrs. Haviland first heard of Miss Peyton through you, what you thought of the affair, and whether you know anything of her beyond what you told me when she applied for the situation?"

"Really," said Mr. Foster, "I cannot tell you what I think of the marriage, beyond what everyone must think who knows Mr. Haviland's wealth and position; of course it's a capital match for a dependent girl like Miss Peyton. I don't know Haviland, you see, and I do know her, and—"

"And you think Haviland's a lucky dog, don't you? That's about it, eh, Foster?" and Mr. Burdett chuckled, after a fashion which it was particularly fortunate for him that his Selina was not there to observe.

Mr. Eliot Foster smiled grimly. He did think Stephen Haviland a "lucky dog;" but he was not pleased to know that he thought so, and still

less was he pleased that any third person should discern his sentiments.

“Mrs. Haviland is handsome, accomplished, and quite fitted by her manners and address to occupy any position in life,” he replied, with true legal coldness of tone and glance; “Mrs. Burdett need not fear that her sister-in-law will disgrace her in any way. What Mrs. Haviland gains by her marriage, outside money and position, I don’t know; but I don’t think Mr. Haviland is to be pitied, however he may be blamed.”

“Do you happen to know anything more of the lady than you have already told me?” said Mr. Burdett, who instinctively felt that the other was on his guard. “I don’t really mind the thing a bit; as I said before, I don’t see any reason why Haviland shouldn’t please himself; but of course one naturally feels a little curiosity about a new member thus suddenly imported into a family; and as I am really anxious to smooth matters over for all parties, I should like to know anything you can tell me.”

“I cannot add anything to what I told you

when Miss Peyton went to Mrs. Haviland," replied Mr. Eliot Foster; "you heard all I could tell you, then; it was not very much, and it was not very uncommon or interesting. My own knowledge of her was through her father, whom I had to help professionally in his difficulties, as I told you at the time. The Peytons had no relations here, and no friends except myself, and I did little for them,—indeed, I was never called upon to do much: they were of American origin, as you know."

"Yes, I remember you told me so," said Mr. Burdett. "Well, there's really nothing to object to in all that, and I do hope the whole business will blow over, and nothing come of it."

Mr. Eliot Foster tried hard to look entirely unconcerned, to wear an expression of countenance which should signify to Mr. Burdett that, while he took a certain degree of friendly interest in the affair in question, as a matter of importance to his client, he did not feel himself personally involved, however remotely, in any of the disagreeables included. His command of feature

was considerable, but so imperfectly did he convey to Mr. Burdett the impression which he desired, that that gentleman said rather hastily and awkwardly :

“Of course you understand, Foster, that I don’t for a moment mean to impute any blame to you.”

“Of course not,” returned Mr. Eliot Foster in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone, as he twirled a heavy bunch of seals slowly about the forefinger of his right hand.

Mr. Burdett said nothing for more than a minute, during which the lawyer still twirled the seals, and still looked at him. Then he said suddenly, and with fresh vehemence :

“By Jove, I should like to see her !”

Mr. Eliot Foster released his features from restraint. He suffered himself to smile very kindly at Mr. Burdett, and said, not at all in his legal tone,

“You will not fail to admire her when you do see her, and I hope you will be her friend. Not but that she is a woman to hold her own

anywhere, as far as I know of her; but still, women can always make things more or less unpleasant for women, and I should really be glad if this marriage should turn out well."

"Of course, of course," said Mr. Burdett; "I quite see what you mean, and I will do my best to make things smooth."

"That's well," said Mr. Eliot Foster. "And now let me ask you if there's anything at all new in the Donnington matter?"

The two gentlemen then fell to the discussion of business, and the subject of their previous conversation was not again touched upon until Mr. Burdett rose to go, when he said to Mr. Eliot Foster,

"Do you keep up any correspondence with Miss Peyton—Mrs. Stephen Haviland, I should say?"

"No," said Mr. Foster promptly; "why?"

"Only because I thought, if you did, you might give her a hint not to mind about the women; they'll be all right after a while, and you might tell her—"

“That she will find a friend in you. Perhaps I may make an opportunity of telling her that, and, if she’s the sensible woman I take her for, it will be valuable information to her. But I can tell you one thing pretty confidently about Mrs. Stephen Haviland: I don’t think she’s at all likely to mind about the women.”

“Strong-minded, eh?” said Mr. Burdett, anticipating the obnoxious phrase, which was not yet current.

“Decidedly,” said Mr. Eliot Foster. Then the two shook hands and parted; and as Mr. Burdett took his way to the livery-stable where his dog-cart awaited him, he looked cheerful and amused.

“I did not get much news out of Foster,” he thought; “he’s a cautious chap, to be sure; but most likely he had really nothing more to tell. But, if I’m not very much mistaken, unlikely a subject as he looks, Foster has made a fool of himself in that same quarter.”

Mr. Burdett had a trick of using this slighting expression as an easy and appropriate synonym

for love and marriage—the trick was not complimentary to his Selina, but when out of her presence Frank had rather a way of being uncomplimentary to Selina. As he seated himself, and started his fast-trotting dark bay, Frank Burdett smiled still more broadly. “Very handsome and strong-minded, very accomplished, and not at all likely to mind the women. By Jove, I think my new relative is just the person to astonish the Havilands!”

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Mrs. Burdett had employed a portion of the time during which her husband was absent in writing to her sister, Mrs. Marsh. She was a voluminous and diffuse letter-writer, and believed herself to be a proficient in the polite epistolary art, which she accordingly held to be amongst the noblest exercises of the human intellect, and she was apt to speak of writing a “good” letter as an accomplishment, if not quite peculiar to the Havilands, at least shared by only a few other favoured human beings to a limited extent. Rapidity, except indeed of temper, was not Mrs.

Burdett's forte; she did not admire that quality. "Your very ready people, who do everything in a hurry, and consequently do everything badly," were objects of lofty scorn to her; and Mrs. Burdett never concealed her sentiments. She was one of the rudest women in existence, and she genuinely believed herself to be one of the most candid and sincere.

Shortly after Mr. Burdett had left her, she had commenced her letter to her sister Maria. This was certain to be a lengthy epistle, not only because Mrs. Burdett's letters were always long, but because she had to relate and descant upon the family misfortune which had befallen the Havilands, and also because she was very particular ("conscientious" she called it) about postage, foreign postage especially. Not to weigh the paper to an extreme nicety, fill it up and cross it on all four sides, and then perform a feat of calligraphic ingenuity by a postscript under the fold, neatly and squarely avoiding the seal, would have been an impossibility to Mrs. Burdett. On the present occasion she did not perform the cus-

tomary feat; she left the fold unwritten upon until she could add the result of the evening's conversation with Frank over the circumstance which she somewhat inconsistently called a "judgment"—for it would be difficult to conceive, and it would have been terrible to face Mrs. Burdett's anger had she been gravely asked what "judgment" had the Havilands incurred? No doubt she was secretly of opinion that Divine Providence had a favourite among them, known to mankind as Selina Burdett; but she was none the less convinced of the general Haviland privileges.

Profane persons with that dangerous gift, an undisciplined sense of humour, were in the habit of deriving some lamentably unwarranted amusement from Mrs. Burdett's manner of observing the little formalities, more usual then than now, of recognition of the divine interference in mundane matters. "Humanly speaking," or "Please God," or "Under Providence," were phrases in very frequent use with Mrs. Burdett; and she had a comfortable, satisfied way of employing

them, as though she was quite in the divine confidence, but thought this little recognition graceful. She had dwelt at great length upon the "judgment," and had commented pretty severely upon the "time-serving spirit" of the astute Frank in advising her to endure what could not be cured, and the "miserable weakness" which could recognise an excuse for Stephen in this "wretched creature's" beauty, and had congratulated her sister warmly upon her absence from England, which rendered it unnecessary for her to take any notice of the "judgment." And she left her not-quite-concluded task in lightened spirits.

The Burdetts dined out that evening, and the prescient Frank took care to advise his wife—of course suggesting that the excellent idea originated with her—that she had much better not let her opinion of her brother's marriage become known to the Templars, their entertainers; "for, as you said, my dear," said Mr. Burdett, "they won't feel any curiosity if nothing in our manner excites it, and they can't *know* unless we tell them."

Being desirous of keeping up her consequence and that of the Havilands with the Templars, Selina acted on her husband's artfully-administered advice, which he perceived with so much pleasure that it caused him to be taken in a snare. He actually told Selina that he had seen Mr. Eliot Foster, had elicited nothing new from him concerning Stephen's wife, but had formed a shrewd suspicion that the lady in question might have been Mrs. Eliot Foster, had she felt so disposed. Mrs. Burdett accordingly filled up the "fold" of her letter in the following terms :

*"Frank has seen and questioned the unprincipled man, his lawyer, to whose unscrupulous recommendation we owe the introduction of this person to my mother, and indirectly—I desire to do justice even to him—the judgment which has come upon us. Frank, I regret to say, had already insulted me by some attempt to excuse our poor infatuated Stephen on the score of this person's beauty, and I presume he got a very glowing description of her from Mr. Foster, the lawyer. I need hardly say I did not permit him to dwell upon the subject to me, but I heard*

enough to fill me with a horrid suspicion that the judgment is far heavier than we at first supposed. Frank thinks Mr. Foster was in love with this person, and would have married her had she accepted him. Of course, this is too absurd, and so like Frank, who is always ready, just like a man, to make excuses for a handsome woman. I see the matter in a very different light; I am obliged to see it so. My knowledge of the world leaves me no choice; and my belief is that the person recommended to my mother by this unprincipled man has held an equivocal relation to himself. Is it reasonable, my dear Maria, to suppose a creature like that, earning her bread in a dependent situation, would have let the chance of marrying a man in a decent position in life, and with a good business, like this Mr. Foster, slip? This is, of course, confidential; may the full extent of the judgment that has been inflicted upon us remain known to you and to me only! As Havilands, my dear sister, and I trust worthy of that privilege, we shall know how to bear it, and to hide it from the world, always so ready to exclaim, 'How are the mighty fallen!'

Here the resources of the "fold" came to an end, and Selina felt that in this family crisis she at least had done her duty.

There was a provoking intelligence in the expression of Mrs. Burdett's face whenever Frank alluded to Mr. Eliot Foster, in the course of the following few days, which he did not understand and did not like; but he contented himself with remarking to himself, *apropos* of the Havilands, that they were a wrong-headed, exasperating lot, and was well content that he achieved the victory of inducing her to write a civil letter to Stephen Haviland without a preliminary battle with his Selina.

Meanwhile Mr. Eliot Foster felt well pleased with the result of his interview with Mr. Burdett. "That's a good fellow," he thought; "a genuine good fellow. I never saw his wife, but I fancy she's somewhat of a Tartar, and somewhat more of a fool. He will be a good friend to Julia, and that too where and when I could not be of any use. I told him just enough to please and interest him. How little Julia thought I should

so soon have it in my power to do her a good turn!"

It was on a beautiful day in the very depth and heart of the summer, when the country round Meriton was looking, as only English country in the woodland districts ever does look, almost overpoweringly rich in luxuriant beauty, and when her new home presented its most charming appearance, that Mrs. Stephen Haviland experienced the first unpleasant sensation which came to trouble her triumph.

Julia, who had strictly adhered to the resolution she had taken in London, devoted a good deal of time every morning to Mrs. Haviland. The blind old lady was very happy in her society, and enjoyed it more in their changed relation to each other than she had at first believed possible. Her daughter-in-law was to her all which she had been as her companion, and her son's wife into the bargain; so that now Mrs. Haviland could indulge unrestrainedly, without being checked by any scruple as to her own egotism or the lack of

interest on the part of the listener, in talking of her son. The topic must necessarily be as charming to his wife as to his mother, the old lady thought; and if she was just a little wrong, the mistake was not of a serious character. They "got on" together admirably. Julia put her strength of will into the determination to make her mother-in-law happy, and she did it.

She had profited by her former relations with Mrs. Haviland, and used her remarkably acute perceptions to form a tolerably correct estimate of all the members of the family; but she was now so sure of her own position and power, that she felt she had nothing whatever to fear from them, and should probably have very little to do with them. Julia was not so very fond of hearing all the particulars of her husband's childhood and boyhood as his mother supposed, but she preferred that topic to discourses upon Mesdames Fanshaw, Marsh, and Burdett; and besides, she steadily sacrificed her own pleasure to that of her old friend. Thus Mrs. Haviland came to believe in the existence on Julia's part of an intense and

absorbing devotion to Stephen, which completely achieved the conquest of her heart, and so rapidly removed all her timid scruples and apprehensions, that the new *ménage* at Meriton was not a month old before the old lady would have found it impossible to realise that the first intimation of her son's intention to marry Miss Peyton had caused her a shock of disquiet and distrust.

Mrs. Stephen Haviland had been no less successful with the inferior members of the family. The calm and easy air with which she had assumed her new rank, the perfectly familiar tone of authority, in which there was not one touch of arrogance, or the least implication of a want of custom, which in anyone less skilful and self-possessed might have produced embarrassment, had their due effect. The servants made up their minds that the "companion" was a real lady, and instead of being out of her place in her new position, had been out of it in her former station. Perfect justice and urbanity were the distinguishing features of Julia's domestic sway, and she ruled without trouble or molestation.

There had been some very pardonable curiosity—when Mrs. Haviland returned to Meriton, attended only by her maid, and Mrs. Monks told the odd-seeming story of the very quiet marriage—on the subject of the probable relations between the old lady and her daughter-in-law. The junta wondered whether “missis” would take it quietly and kindly, or whether there would be a disruption of family relations, and the old lady betake herself to another home. But a very short time sufficed to set all such speculations satisfactorily at rest.

Julia Haviland had been mistress of Meriton not many weeks before everyone in the house knew how highly she was thought of by Mrs. Haviland. And on one memorable occasion the housekeeper—a well-preserved, well-to-do woman, who had saved money, and steadily resisted the blandishments of the butler, who thought she had better marry him, while she was convinced that she had much better not—announced her opinion in the following words:

“There’s daughter-in-laws and daughter-in-

laws, and there's mother-in-laws and mother-in-laws, but, take my word for it, these here gets on together wonderful; and it's my belief as Mrs. 'Aviland likes Mrs. Stephen's company a deal better than the young ladies'."

By which Mrs. Drury meant Mrs. Haviland's three daughters, the *outraged*—by the possibility—Havilands themselves.

It was the custom of the two ladies to walk in the flower-garden, which had been such a source of pleasure formerly to Mrs. Haviland, every morning. The windows of the breakfast-room opened upon this garden, and the old lady would frequently walk there, leaning upon Julia's arm, until her son made his appearance and called them to breakfast. They were standing there on the beautiful morning already referred to, and the old lady, with perfectly unaffected cheerfulness, was exercising her memory of the disposition and contents of the flower-beds. Julia was looking magnificently handsome and serenely happy as she stood in the pure morning air, her white dress and fluttering ribbons stirred,

like her rich hair, by the passing of the scented breeze.

"I never liked a mixture of colours in flowers," the old lady was saying; "and the pinks and carnations in particular I liked to keep apart. How does the border of white pinks round the verbena-bed look?"

"Very well indeed," said Julia; "if you will sit here on the bench for a minute, I will go and bring you one or two of the white pinks."

She went to the verbena-bed, and gathered a few of the flowers which formed its fragrant, delicate border. As she came towards the place she had left, looking at the flowers for which she had plucked a background of geranium-leaf, she saw that her husband had joined his mother, and that he had a packet of letters in his hand. She gave him a bright smile, laid the little bouquet on his mother's lap, and said :

"Are the letters delivered already? It is very early, isn't it?"

"O no; it is at least an hour too soon," Stephen Haviland answered; "these letters are

from Maria and her husband. They are very fond of sending them otherwise than through the post, whenever they can manage it; and I was just telling my mother that our old friend Hugh Gaynor has arrived at the vicarage, and brought these letters."

Then, addressing his mother, as he gave her his arm and led her to the house, he continued,

"I shall ride over to Burnham after breakfast, and, if you and Julia have no objection, ask Hugh to dine with us to-morrow; it's no good asking him to-day—of course he could not leave his father so soon. Maria says his health is all right again, and he wants a curacy somewhere where there's plenty of poverty and wickedness—the old story over again. Mother, what a queer fellow he is!"

"A very good fellow, my dear," said Mrs. Haviland; "I wish, for the sake of the poor and the rich too, for that matter, there were a good many more such clergymen as Hugh Gaynor. How glad he will be to see you!"

"He will indeed," said Stephen; and then,

remembering that his wife was a stranger to the subject of their dialogue, he turned his head towards her, while he placed his mother in her invariable seat, and said :

“ We are talking of an old schoolfellow of mine, who has just come back from Naples, a son of the Vicar of Burnham, Mr. Gaynor. By the bye, Julia, I suppose as it isn't our parish, and Mrs. Gaynor is an invalid, you don't know them at all.”

Julia had taken her place at the breakfast-table, and was looking straight before her with a fixed grave expression. She did not look at her husband, but her colour changed slightly as she said :

“ No, I have never seen Mr. or Mrs. Gaynor, and I did not know there was a son. They sent cards here, but your mother has not felt inclined to drive so far as Burnham.”

“ Then you and I will ride over ; they are queer old people, and I don't care for them ; but now that Hugh is likely to be there for some time, I must do the civil.”

"Are you and Mr. Hugh Gaynor very intimate?"

"We were, and I hope we shall be again; but I have not seen him since he went to his first curacy,—he would go into the Church, though all his family were dead against it; and I went out to India."

"Is Mr. Gaynor a young man?" asked Julia.

"He and I are exactly the same age. My uncle gave his father the living of Burnham; they had been friends and schoolfellows; and it was the only thing I ever heard of his giving anyone in the whole course of his selfish old life; and Hugh knew all this place well as a boy, before I had ever seen it. I fancy the old man would have done something handsome for him, if he had not insisted on becoming a parson. You think so, don't you, mother?"

"I have heard your father say his brother took a great interest in the Gaynors, my dear. We never knew much of them. There was a little unpleasantness after we came here—I had nothing to do with it."

"No; I'm quite sure of that," said Stephen. "And it will be all right now that Hugh has come home.—Julia, you have forgotten to give me my tea."

"I beg your pardon," she said. Then, as she handed him his cup, she added, with a little effort, "Has Mr. Gaynor been abroad for a long time?"

"For two years, I believe. His health broke down from overwork in some horrible seaside town—Devonport, I think, or some place near it—which was a perfect sink of poverty and vice; and they sent him to Italy to save his life."

"My daughter Maria," said Mrs. Haviland, addressing herself to Julia, "told me some time ago—indeed I think it was in the last letter I was able to read for myself—that he was very near dying at Naples, but when he got a little better he wanted to get back at once to his work. However, they would not let him. I daresay he will not stay long at Burnham."

"At all events," said Stephen, "we must see as much of him as possible in the time."

More than once during this brief conversation Julia had glanced with some anxiety at the letters which her husband had placed on the table. Had he read them? Surely not, she thought; or, if he had, they contained nothing of an unpleasant nature. Anything like timidity was so unnatural to her, that Julia felt her nerves must indeed have been shaken when she could hesitate to ask questions she wished to ask. She did hesitate, however, and Stephen unconsciously came to her relief.

"I shall start immediately," he said; "Hugh sent his father's groom here with the letters, and he says they are sure to be at home all day. So I shall hand these letters over to you to read them to my mother."

He pushed them towards her as he spoke, and Julia took them up.

"Are they from Maria?" asked the old lady very placidly. A letter from Maria was not by any means a priceless blessing to Maria's family, and, in Mrs. Haviland's new-born courage and condition of content, she felt that it really did

not matter much what Maria said about Stephen's marriage. She could wait to know with perfect patience. It could not be anything abusive, or Stephen would not have allowed Julia to see the letter. So much the better for everyone, and especially for Maria.

Mrs. Marsh entertained certain decided and immutable opinions concerning the view which a Haviland was bound to take of foreign countries, and the tone, partly patronising and partly compassionate, which it behoved her to adopt in her letters during and concerning her sojourn abroad. This mental condition, not by any means an uncommon one for the British female, rendered her letters rather amusing productions to anyone gifted with a sense of humour. She did not lay claim to the possession of such epistolary talent as Mrs. Burdett's; it was of faith among the Havilands that Selina's letters were incomparable. Mrs. Stephen Haviland was not a stranger to Mrs. Marsh's style, but these particular letters interested her for more reasons than one.

The two ladies adjourned to the garden, and

when the elder was seated comfortably on the cushioned bench the younger read the letters to her. It was not until near the termination of Mrs. Marsh's epistle, which contained much political wisdom, a little misty theology, and a lecture on Vesuvius and the Bourbons, that Julia found any allusion to herself. Half-way down the last page Mrs. Marsh wrote: "The last post has brought us Stephen's letter. He informs us of his marriage. Such congratulations as we can offer without knowing the lady, we beg you to make acceptable to him."

Julia read this cool phrase with an unchanging voice, and steadily concluded the letter without interposing a remark. But Mrs. Haviland felt and looked uncomfortable. She laid her thin, white, almost transparent, hand on her daughter-in-law's arm, and said:

"You must not mind Maria, my dear. She is very sensible, you know, and has a great deal of judgment, and she never takes anything for granted. You and she will be very good friends, especially," added the old lady after an instant's

hesitation, "if Hugh Gaynor is prepossessed in your favour."

"Mrs. Marsh thinks very highly of Mr. Gaynor, then?" asked Julia.

"Yes, my dear. She has mentioned him frequently in her letters. You don't need to *try* to please anyone, but still I should be glad if Hugh Gaynor thought as I do."

Julia took the hand that lay upon her arm and kissed it tenderly.

"I am so happy," she said,—but her face, which her companion could not see, was troubled,—“with you and Stephen, that perhaps I hardly care enough for the good opinion of others. But if it will please you, and I am sure it will, I will endeavour that Mr. Gaynor shall give a good report of me to Mrs. Marsh. Would you mind my leaving you now? I have letters to write this morning.”

"Not in the least, my dear. I shall stay here quite contentedly. The scent of the flowers and the music in the air keep me company."

It was with a perturbed spirit that Julia

Haviland reëntered the house and sought the solitude of her dressing-room. But it was characteristic of her that she thought, as she went, of the peaceful spirit which her mother-in-law's answer evinced, and wondered at the patience thus wrought by experience.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CONCERNING A CURATE.

THE Reverend Hugh Gaynor was a much more remarkable man and cleric, in the time when Julia Haviland awaited his appearance at Meriton with an anxious and perturbed spirit, than he would be in the present day, when clerical eccentricities are numerous and various. He was considerably in advance of his age, which had not yet entered the "earnest" epoch, and to which Ritualism, with all the rows therefrom arising, was unknown. He would not have been accounted an Evangelical according to modern interpretation; he preferred the Gospel according to the Apostles, to the Gospel according to Exeter Hall; and muscular Christianity was not in his line. Indeed, he was of a delicate constitution, and by nature rather intellectually than physically

active. Hugh Gaynor had become a clergyman—he had a great dislike to 'hearing that proceeding designated "gone into the Church"—because he truly believed it was his vocation to do so.

He had encountered a good deal of opposition and endured much trial in the carrying out of his purpose,—none keener than the certain, if slow, quenching of his own enthusiasm,—and disappointment in his estimate of all the good his zeal, industry, energy, and devotion were to do. He lost heart after a time, but only for a time, when he had thoroughly fathomed the depth of the hopeless stolidity, the utter spiritual incapacity, the mere animal perceptions, of the British agriculturist classes; when he found himself forced to wonder impatiently, sometimes almost articulately, and at imminent risk of scandalising some complacent bystander, whether these people had any souls to be saved or lost. It really did seem as if the one event would hardly be worth the trouble, so little could they be brought to understand the necessity or appreciate the privilege; and the other—well, it seemed profane, even unspoken,

but could it be quite just? so little could they be brought to understand anything about "sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come."

Burnham Vicarage was a capital house, and the living of Burnham was a very good thing in the ecclesiastical-preferment line; and Hugh Gaynor might have been as happy and as popular a young curate as any in England, besides being exceptionally well-off, in the employ of his own father, with the "run" of the house and the particularly well-appointed stables, especially as his spiritual pastor and master was a parson of the good old-fashioned sort, who troubled himself very little about the souls of mankind, including his own. The Rev. Theobald Gaynor had more than one vexation to sustain connected with his "excessively provoking" son. "Hugh really was unbearable; so totally unlike other people, and thinking himself always right and everybody else wrong; just as if his father, who has been thirty years in the Church, was not likely to know what was best for a curate." Such were the comments of Mrs. Gaynor, a cold little woman, of a frugal

and not expansive mind, whose faith in her husband impressed the observer rather as the evidence of a subtle kind of egoism, than as that of the fervent, unreasoning, and unreasonable affection which is always pardonable, however silly.

What the Rev. Theobald thought best for a curate was, that he should form an estimate of his rector's duty on the most moderate scale consistent with not getting talked about, and should then go and do it himself, strictly avoiding "new-fangled nonsense," and bothering the people with matters which they did not understand, and did not want to understand. But to this temperate and easy standard the impracticable Hugh would not conform; it appeared that he did not wish his duties to be moderate or his life to be easy; and this inexplicable behaviour, ensuing on his obstinate preference for the clerical profession, caused his father much annoyance.

There was a touch of philosophy about the Rev. Theobald, however, and not a little dry and quiet humour; and he exercised both in his contemplation of his son's brave endeavours to carry

out his own ideas of a clergyman's duty, and especially in the direction of teaching, in the parish of Burnham. "He will find out the use of all that fine imagery and appeal to their imaginations before long," the amused parent would think with satisfaction: "and discover that he's not going to be a prophet or a reformer in his own or any other country; then perhaps he'll settle down, and let us and himself have a quiet life." He would gently quiz his son's sermons, which were indeed a little flowery just at first, though they became plain, unadorned, and hard-hitting enough afterwards, especially when he tried to rouse his bucolic parishioners to anticipations of the world to come.

"You won't find it easy to frighten them, my dear boy," the rector would say; "Bogues won't do it; and as to the other thing—now, do you *really* think 'a land of pure delight, where saints immortal reign,' means anything at all, or anything pleasant, to Clarke and Jackson and Miller? A land running with beer and gin, where pipes and tobacco don't cost anything, and there's an

unfailingly good market for their pigs, would be their notion of heaven, if you could get them to tell you the truth, or to have any notion at all on the subject; but they have not. There have you been preaching—a very pretty sermon indeed; I don't know that I ever heard anything prettier or more incomprehensible to the audience, and *rather* too long—about the likeness of the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard-seed, and its growing up into a tree, and the fowls of the air sheltering under its branches. I wonder what Tom Locke and his wife Sukey thought about all that, if they happened to take their minds off the dinner for a minute or two. My dear boy, mustard-seed does not grow at that rate here; it is invariably associated in the British mind with cress; the tree isn't known in Hampshire; and if your pet section of the congregation went home with any notions at all in their heads, depend upon it they were compounded of the magic beanstalk of fiction and the familiar hen-roosts of their domestic life."

So there was discomfiture on every side for

Hugh Gaynor; and being young and impatient he did not wait to think whether the sturdiest and worthiest of battles might not be fought by his staying in the midst of the discomfiture and discouragement, and fighting *them*. He had almost every qualification of a faithful soldier and servant under the banner of his enlistment, except patience. He acquired that afterwards, and was patient, not only with others, but with himself—much more difficult to a finely-strung conscience—but not until he had encountered difficulties in comparison with which the obtuseness of a Burnham congregation was slight indeed.

Whatever grief the parting between the father and son may have occasioned them respectively, when Hugh Gaynor finally made up his mind to go to Devonport, and try whether the cure of souls in that place would be more satisfactory than the process had proved in the prosperous district of Burnham, the rector and curate did not regret the termination of their mutual relation. Hugh made an exchange by which all parties benefited. Mr. Collins, the curate who replaced him at Burn-

ham, was a young man of no particular views, and of harmless character, who rode well, had a great taste for fly-fishing, and made himself invaluable to Mrs. Gaynor in the manufacture of her currant, gooseberry, and elder wine. The parishioners liked Mr. Collins. " Bless'ee, he don't worry us, not he ; and he's as punctual in he's sermons as if he were a watchin' the clock for his own dinner ; and preaches beautiful." Such was Sukey Locke's comment after Mr. Collins had been six weeks in the parish. " It were about King David last Sunday, which wrote ' With one consent let all the earth,'—I daresay as it ain't in your Prayer-book, you not bein' church, Mrs. Weedle,—and about a ewe-lamb ; but my Tom says as he doesn't hold with people like that bein' up to such dirty tricks." The rector liked Mr. Collins's society better than his son's, and the new curate amused him almost as much as the old one had done.

Stephen Haviland had entered on the active scenes of his life a little later than the time at which Hugh Gaynor had gone forth in high hope

and strong confidence, destined to be carefully sifted of the adulterating ingredient of self, to do battle with darkness and ignorance and vice, to uproot sin and assuage sorrow, putting it to profitable uses. The young men, who had been playmates in childhood, schoolmates in boyhood, and friends in early manhood, were as dissimilar in character as in personal appearance; and the dreams, ambitions, and desired rewards of the one were wholly unintelligible to the other. Stephen Haviland was essentially a worldly, Hugh Gaynor was emphatically an unworldly, man. Nevertheless, their companionship had been very close, and their friendship very real. They had lost sight of each other of late, as men do; their projected correspondence had come to an end, like all similar projects, only a little sooner, in consequence of the difference between them; such a difference always comes out so much more strongly in letter-writing than in personal intercourse. It remained now to be seen whether the former intimacy would naturally renew itself, or whether the widely varying experience of the two men, since their roads

in life had been sundered so far, would operate in rendering such intimacy distasteful and impossible.

Hugh Gaynor had worked hard and striven bravely for the realisation of his ideal amid the busy and squalid crowd of the seaport town to which he had gone, and though he was not much nearer to his object there than among the stolid soulless inhabitants of Burnham, he worked with more heart and suffered less discouragement. The people were very vicious and very dark, but they were not so intensely stupid, so impervious, so thoroughly satisfied with themselves. And then they were much poorer; for Burnham was a well-to-do unprogressive place, where nobody was oppressively rich, and very few were distressingly poor; and in this respect had disconcerted Hugh Gaynor materially. He had nothing of that kind to complain of at Devonport; the most active, far-reaching, and inexhaustible charity and the largest resources would have found engrossing occupation there.

Hugh Gaynor worked away among the people

with all his heart and all his energies, and had a fair amount of satisfaction in his work, if not in its results, when his health suddenly broke down. His father thought he had better come home and have some hunting. His mother thought he had better come home and have nice wholesome dinners; she was sure he lived "down there" on nasty messes cooked anyhow; and hoped he would not try to be so much better than his neighbours for the future. Hugh himself thought he had better remain at his post until his guard should be relieved by command, and he should be summoned to report himself at head-quarters; but he acted on medical advice, which sent him abroad, and kept him there. He carried with him to Italy no worse ailment than delicacy of the chest and some exhaustion of the nerves. He had outlived the morbid sensitiveness of feeling which had made it intolerable to him to do the duties of his position without seeing their fruits; he had learned to be patient; and if he had had a twinge of pain at the heart from another cause, it was not very severe or lasting.

In the days of Hugh Gaynor's early manhood, marriage was included in the whole duty of man, by much more general consent than at present. Its being excluded from the whole duty of curates, was an idea from the contemplation of which society would have shrunk back alarmed. Hugh had been speculated in pretty freely by the young ladies in the precincts of Burnham; and as he was an exceptional curate, being the only son of a tolerably rich man, not without the approbation and aid of their mothers. But in vain. He had never shown any tendency towards marriage, and his departure to Devonport closed the bidding.

It was in that unpromising locality that Hugh Gaynor learned to love. No one knew much about the story. It was an old story now, ended and done with—had been an old story for some years when Hugh's health broke down; so that unless that collapse should be sentimentally regarded as the long-deferred execution of a sentence passed without hope or appeal, he was not a "blighted being." The girl he had loved was very beautiful and very wilful, and altogether one

who, his conscience told him, would not have helped him, but hindered him. He knew he had had a lucky escape when she refused him; he knew she would have been an obstacle to him always, as she was a temptation then; but he loved her; and the rejection which she unhesitatingly inflicted upon him, gave him pain which he really did regard as unbearable for a time.

But he soon began to bear it very well, and long before he returned to England could think of it as good for him, and for the people to be intrusted to his care. He felt quite sure, but not with a morbid, or a spiteful, or a repining certainty, that he should never marry; and considering the degree of suffering from which such a conviction ordinarily arises, he had escaped with a mercifully small share. Heart-whole and fancy-free Hugh Gaynor returned to England, longing only for the care and the strife and the toil of the life of a clergyman, whose calling is not a profession but a vocation.

It was perhaps fortunate for him, and conducive to the restoration of his health, that this care

and strife and toil did not come quite so soon as he summoned them. There was some difficulty in procuring a location for this eccentric curate, who required everything which other people would most carefully have avoided; and in the mean time Hugh Gaynor intended to remain at his father's house, and visit his old friends. Many of these old friends had come to the conclusion that Hugh was quite an oddity, so little were they able to comprehend his extraordinary notions of what his duty consisted in, and his persistency in carrying them out; but Hugh had ingratiating ways with him, and he did not "lecture" people, or set himself up with an intolerable assumption of being holier than they; and, on the whole, they found his exceptional goodness very tolerable.

"I suppose you know Haviland is married," the rector of Burnham said to his son, in the course of a long talk full of local interest, on the evening of the young curate's arrival at his father's house, where, in point of being expected to eat more than was good for him, and to partake of British drinks in great variety and profusion, he

might have been the prodigal son receiving a welcome to match.

"Yes," replied Hugh; "I heard about it from Mrs. Marsh, and was rather surprised, not that Stephen Haviland should marry, but that he should not have married a more important person than this Miss Peyton, by his sister's account, seems to be. A companion to the old lady, or something of that sort, was she not? The temptation was her beauty, I conclude, though Mrs. Marsh could not tell me much about her in any respect."

"No, I daresay not," said the rector, "and would not if she could. The Havilands are not remarkably keen or observant about other people's beauty. I understand the lady in question is very handsome, and has all the proverbial magnificence of the unknown to recommend her to boot. Nobody knows much of her. I believe she is an American, or of American descent, if of any in particular."

The manner and tone of the Reverend Theobald Gaynor were very disdainful here; he was, as

became his calling, a great stickler for birth, blood, and connection; a successor of the Apostles with whom there was very great distinction of persons indeed.

“Did Mrs. Marsh mention that the new Mrs. Haviland of Meriton had lived with her mother as companion, or in some nondescript position of that kind?” added Mr. Gaynor.

“She did say something about it—something, I mean, which led me to suppose that Stephen Haviland had not married a lady who would be regarded by the world as quite in his own position,” said Hugh, almost timidly; for he was divided between his reluctance to say anything in which there might appear to be a rebuke to his father, and the ever-present and ever-practical adherence to the truth which was one of his characteristic habits. The fact was, that Mrs. Marsh had spoken very strongly to Hugh Gaynor on the subject of her brother’s marriage,—considerably adorning the rather meagre tale which alone even the imaginative efforts of Selina had enabled her to concoct for transmission to her sister,—and that

extremely repugnant to her son's tastes and alien to his habits—when Stephen Haviland rode up, and, dismounting at the hall-door, greeted him with a warmth which Hugh heartily reciprocated. Mrs. Gaynor's formal politenesses and fidgety insistence on learning what Hugh intended to do and when he intended to do it, caused Stephen to be much relieved when at length she fidgeted herself away, with an apologetic observation to the effect that she had to consult Mr. Collins about bottling the last cask of currant-wine, and that if she deferred doing so, some tiresome sick person in the village would be sure to want him, and the wine might be spoiled.

In the first glance exchanged between the two friends, each had taken note of the alteration in the other; but there was this marked difference in the result of their observations: Hugh thought Stephen changed for the better—Stephen thought Hugh changed for the worse. The strong, stalwart, handsome, prosperous man, in every line of whose face and figure vigour found expression, whose ruddy cheek and bright dark eyes spoke

of health, and in whose manner and tone there was pleasant evidence of a fulness of content such as falls seldom, and for but brief periods, to the share of human beings—the man in whose face the observant eye could discern no sign of mental strife, or the keen, wearing experiences of life; who looked, as he was, thoroughly occupied and engrossed with the interests and the pleasures of his own existence—presented a strong contrast to the friend of his boyhood, who looked so much older than he did, and was, in reality, a few years younger.

Hugh Gaynor was a tall, slightly-built man, with no remarkable traits of personal appearance, except fine clear-blue eyes, capable of many and vivid expressions, but which habitually wore that of rather sad and contemplative mildness; and close-curling, thick brown hair, in which Stephen Haviland, who had, in such matters, an eye as keen and rapid as a woman's, noted many silver threads. He was not a handsome, and certainly not an ugly man; he was simply insignificant-looking, a man whom one might pass in a street,

## CHAPTER VII.

### ANOTHER STOREY.

THE Reverend Hugh Gaynor looked in motionless astonishment at the lady who confronted him with the warning gesture, until she moved towards him with a steady, graceful step, and when near him, held out her hand, which he took mechanically.

“You are surprised to see me here, Mr. Gaynor?” said Julia Haviland, in the sweetest of the many sweet tones within the compass of her voice. “You had no suspicion who was the new Mrs. Haviland to whom you were to be introduced?”

“I had no suspicion, indeed,” said Hugh Gaynor, in a grave, embarrassed tone; while the questioner held her steady gaze directed to his face. “I heard at Naples of Stephen’s marriage; but they told me—”

“That he had married a Miss Peyton, a lady

of American origin, his mother's companion ?  
That was what you heard."

"It was."

Hugh Gaynor spoke like a man in pain. Julia thoroughly understood what was passing in his mind. Up to this moment they had both been standing ; now she seated herself, and motioned him to a place beside her. Then, leaning slightly towards him, her face pale and earnest, and her eyes never releasing their hold on him, she said :

"You are shocked at the discovery you have made. I see that ; I knew you would be shocked. When the casual mention of your name made me aware of a danger lurking here, close to my new home, which I had never feared, I knew how you would feel about this matter. I knew how a good man like you would regard anything in which there was deception."

"I am deeply grieved," said Hugh Gaynor ;  
"and, more than grieved, I am puzzled. Stephen Haviland is my old friend ; and how am I to act towards him ?"

"Will you listen to me patiently ?" said Julia,

cost all the rest, hers? She did not confuse the listener's moral sense, or blind his judgment in the least, nor had she hoped to do so; but she silenced him, which was what she intended. When she spoke of her husband there was not in her voice the slightest tone, or in her manner the faintest suggestion, of the coolness bordering on contempt with which she had avowed to Mr. Eliot Foster her "liking" for Stephen Haviland. "I need not talk to you, who have known him so long," she said, "about him, or tell you what he is, and how happy he makes me. In reality, it is only for his sake and his mother's I care for the maintenance of the fiction concerning me. I don't think it would matter to me individually if all the world knew the truth; knew all that you could tell them. I should still have him and his love, and all with which it surrounds me."

Mr. Eliot Foster, if unobserved he could have heard these enthusiastic phrases, might have mentally compared them with the cool statement of her motives made to him by his peremptory

client, to the increase of his experience in feminine tactics.

With perfect sincerity, Julia declared her anxiety for civility and good behaviour on the part of Stephen's sisters to arise entirely out of consideration for him; adding, with a little more revelation of herself than she quite intended, "I should be such a fool, that I should only have myself to blame if such people as they are could influence me in any way, or disturb my peace."

On the whole, the manner of the listener to this explanatory statement was satisfactory, and the little he said—for Hugh Gaynor did say but little; a reticence which did not disappoint Julia—was encouraging. But one difficulty had to be encountered which she felt needed all her tact. The moment for meeting the one and displaying the other came when Hugh Gaynor asked her if her husband was aware of her former acquaintance with him. A closer observer, one of a more suspicious turn of mind, would have divined, by the slight change of colour and the faint mo-

"Yes," she said; "I like him very much—he is very agreeable."

Something constrained and languid in her tone caught Stephen Haviland's ear. He looked sharply at her.

"Are you ill, Julia? Is your head aching still?"

"Yes," she replied. "It aches badly. Mr. Gaynor came before I went to lie down, and I did not like to leave him until you should have come in. But I think I must leave him to you now."

She went away, and did not appear again until dinner-time, when she was radiant in looks and in spirits. By an instinct, not altogether of coquetry, though dashed with it, she had dressed herself with peculiar care, and in unusually rich attire. She loved splendour and show; but her good taste preserved her from over-lavishness in the display of her novel and unaccustomed wealth. On this occasion, however, she made her appearance in attire as costly as it was becoming. She wore rich jewels, her husband's gifts, and gorgeous

Indian fabrics which he had brought home, and the diversion of which from themselves was among the bitterest wrongs sustained by his outraged sisters.

She wished to produce a distinct impression on Hugh Gaynor, something different from the gentle and compassionate recollection of his former attachment to her, and the misery she had endured in the lot she had preferred to that which he would have shared with her. Not thus should he think of her; all the past must be effaced. She had parted from her old life, done with it for ever, and she would obliterate it in his mind also; neither he nor anyone should dare to think of her otherwise than as she chose them to think. The past was dead; she would not suffer him to revive it. Stephen was alone when she came into the drawing-room, in the western front of the house. The large windows were all alight with the setting-sun, and beyond them stretched the flower-garden, with its closing blossoms. The last twitter of the birds was borne in on the scented air. The dinner-hour at Meriton was late, in comparison with

that way, the depression she had felt before again seized upon her.

“Am I superstitious,” she thought, “that I feel such a strange shrinking and vague fear? What have I done? The child is no worse than Hugh Gaynor believes him dead; he never could come in contact with him in any way. No; I did the best thing I could for him. I had no more in my power. No; it is only that I have been free from the thought, the recollection of him for so long, that when they return to me, my nerves rebel. They must be made more obedient.” She moved to the window, and stood there, wrapped in her white dressing-gown, and gazing out on the gardens and the woods, steeped in the moonlight. After a little, she turned wearily away and shivered.

“How chilly it is!” she muttered. “The summer moonlight always makes me feel cold and comfortless. I must try to sleep away this wretched feeling. I did him no injury; I only saved myself and Stephen much harm. I could not have done otherwise. Why do I torment

myself with these ridiculous fancies? I said I don't believe in fate; and I don't. I said conduct is fate; and so it is. If a swift thought, a mere momentary thought, passed over me that it would be well for me, safe for me, my truest, my most entire security if he were dead—what then? That's *not* a thought; that's a phantasm of the brain not worth a moment's consideration. But wish him dead! O, no, no!"

While Julia Haviland was playing that evening, and her husband—who really had much taste for music, and a correct ear, but who conscientiously believed that nobody but the Havilands were real judges of music, and that their fiat was a performer's best reward—was standing by her, congratulating himself that even in respect of her talents and accomplishments his wife was fitted to be a Haviland, Hugh Gaynor took a seat beside the blind old lady. He looked at her with pleased interest, and noted, with the accurate eye of one accustomed to observe numerous phases of human deprivation and calamity, her well-cared-for look. Money and menial attendance only

could not produce that. The helplessness of her state was indeed surrounded with all material comforts; but it was not their indications which he saw and understood.

The placid happiness, the patient calm of the old lady, had another origin. He watched her face, and saw how she enjoyed the music, how her sensitive countenance changed under its influence, how tranquil musing seemed to fill her soul; and he wondered. He had known illness, exhaustion, suffering; had even experienced much of the vague, satisfied, drifting sensation which comes with great weariness when pain has ceased; but this patience, this placidity, this evident power of still enjoying life under the deprivation—which, to him, with his quick brain and eagerness for new impressions, his energy of mind and love of labour, would have been intolerable—was inexplicable. “It is a direct gift, a grace from God,” he thought; “an instance of His wonderful dealings with His creatures. To the superficial judgment of the outer world, two great misfortunes have befallen this

harmless, kind, pious old lady—her own blindness, and Stephen's marriage. I am quite sure the latter has made her happier than ever she was in her life; and I daresay she would hesitate to describe the former as an unmitigated calamity." For some time he sat by Mrs. Haviland in silence; at length, in a pause of the music, she said—

"I told you she played beautifully, Hugh; I did not say too much, did I?"

Hugh Gaynor's memory had just been straying to a time when he had found a wonderful charm in the same music, played by the same musician. A picture was before his mind's eye at that moment which had long been unlooked upon. It was of the place where he had last heard Julia play, and the persons who had been present. Wonderful, inexplicable human life! Was that time a dream, and this real? or is this before his eyes a phantom, and the image of the past the image of the truth? He had to rouse himself with an effort from his reverie to answer.

"No, indeed, you did not. One rarely hears such music."

"It does me so much good, Hugh, and it gives me so much pleasure. It occupies me; it gives me so much to feel and to think about; while I am listening to it, I lose the listless feeling which is the most painful part to me of my affliction *now*. You must not think I yield to this, Hugh," said the old lady, with a simple earnestness and quaint deference in her manner which touched the young clergyman keenly. "*You* would not think that right, I know; but it does come sometimes in spite of me."

"Dear Mrs. Haviland," said Hugh, "I think you are so wonderfully patient and resigned. I could not have believed it possible; and who would dare to say that he could be so in your place?—not I, I am sure."

"No, my dear, I dare say not; but then you are a man, you know," said his unsophisticated old friend, in a tone of quiet conviction. "Men are restless, you see, and want their own way in everything; and they don't understand not having it."

Hugh smiled, thinking of the illustration of

and protest against her statement then before her unconscious, sightless eyes.

"I am sure," he said, "no man could be so patient as you are."

"Perhaps no man could have such compensations. I think the best of them is Julia's music. It gives me such delightful thoughts while I am listening to it; and I am sure I owe to it the delightful dreams I so often have." She paused, and closed her eyes, as if recalling them.

"People say," she continued, "it is better to have been born blind than to lose one's sight as I have done; but I don't think so. The memory is stored with beautiful objects, and one can draw upon its stores for refreshment as upon the books one has read. Night is a happy time to me. I am not blind in my dreams; but I suppose those who had never seen would be?"

"I don't know," said Hugh; "the idea never occurred to me. I cannot conceive the dreams of the blind."

"Mine are wonderful sometimes," said the

old lady; "I see such beautiful scenery;\* not places with which I ever was familiar, for I have travelled very little, and know, even of the beauty of England, only places which are near us here. So, you see, it is not memory, but a kind of revelation, and such as, I trust, may be made to many who are afflicted, besides me."

"Are they, then, quite strange scenes which you see in these dreams, or have they any likeness to those you have seen, magnified or more beautiful?"

"No," she replied; "none. I have never seen the splendid tropical forests, with their great tangle of gigantic trees, with the magnificent flowers, such as might have grown in Eden, through which I wander in my dreams; nor the grand, snow-capped mountains, the glaciers, the ravines, the pine-forests, and the deep, swift, thundering torrents which sparkle and roar for me in my sleep. I can remember the sunsets I have seen—they are beautiful here, as you know; but I remember no such sunsets as I see in my

\* A fact.

dreams, when I am alone on the seashore, or on the heights, great heights, terrible, inaccessible. But I never have a dream of fear, or danger, or anything but peace. The glory of light and colour is wonderful, quite past anything I can recall having ever seen. And sometimes I see in my dreams green fields, and English trees in the summer-time, and gardens—but not these gardens that I know; and sometimes the great waste lands of the New World; and sometimes the sea—the sea from the midst of the waters, no shore, no sail, only the glorious waves, and the moonlight; and I have no sense of where I am, or from whence I am looking at them; and time seems to stand still, in the peace and beauty of my dream. I wonder if there are such places, Hugh; if the real world can be as beautiful as that which I see?”

“Perhaps not,” said Hugh; “perhaps there is nothing really like what you see in those dreams; they may be God-given visions of the land whose beauty ‘eye hath not seen, nor heart of man conceived.’”

“I have sometimes thought so, too,” said the old lady simply. “And I am glad I have told you this, because I know when you heard that I was blind, and when you saw me, you were very sorry for me ; and I am glad you should know how much enjoyment I have notwithstanding. I hope it is so with others. Many people would find it hard to understand that I have so much peace.”

“They would, indeed,” said Hugh ; “for it is of the order and the origin which passes understanding.”

There were two whose eyes were “held waking” that night, under the roof of Meriton. They were the mistress of the house, and her guest, Hugh Gaynor. Julia was angry with herself for the thoughts which disturbed and importuned her, and would not be put away. Hugh was troubled, because chords long silent within his breast had been roughly touched, and because he could not review the day with the satisfaction of conscience which was habitual to him.

In the early morning time, Julia Haviland fell

asleep; but her rest was not prolonged, and she awoke suddenly with a loud cry.

“It is nothing,” she said to her husband—but she gasped for breath as she said it, and sat up, and pushed her heavy hair off her face, which was deadly pale—“it is nothing; I have had a dreadful dream, a terrible dream.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CROWNED WITH SUCCESS.

“You had better read *that*, and tell me what you think of it,” said Mrs. Burdett to her husband, on a remarkably fine autumn morning, very suggestive of cover-shooting, with the pleasant adjuncts of a well-selected and substantial luncheon, and when it happened that the mind of the partner of Mrs. Burdett’s existence was directed longingly towards pastimes and comforts of such a description. “*That*” meant a letter which Mrs. Burdett had just received, and which her husband had watched her reading with some curiosity, which he skilfully masked under an apparently-close perusal of the newspaper. The scene was the breakfast-table,—it was the frequent theatre of “explanations” between the pair; by this gentle

term the lady was in the habit of describing conversations which occasionally reached the height of objurcation on her part, and not unfrequently included a considerable amount of very aggravating sarcasm on that of the incorrigible Frank,—and the time shortly after the arrival of the post-bag.

Mrs. Burdett was one of those not-rare specimens of womankind who, having given the fullest possible vent to their temper, which they call their feelings, on a certain subject, and especially having declared that the very mention of it is abhorrent to them, and by all means to be avoided by those who desire to retain their good graces, are thenceforth devoured with an uneasy and insatiable desire to recur to that same subject, or to have it recurred to, and who most bitterly, because *perforce* indirectly, resent adherence to their own especial edict.

Of this weakness Mr. Burdett was perfectly aware; indeed, his Selina had contrived to conceal very few of her weaknesses from him, though he regarded them with wise and genuine toleration;

and having an end of his own to gain, on which he set considerable store, he had conformed to her sovereign will and pleasure in the matter of abstaining from talking of the "judgment" which had befallen the Havilands, with an unquestioning obedience which had excited Selina's "feelings" to an almost unbearable pitch. He had been deaf to all hints, impervious to all temptations. He knew that Selina was dying to talk about her brother and "the wretched minx," and longing to get at somebody who could give her authentic information concerning them. He had been much amused by the zeal with which she had pursued Hugh Gaynor with invitations on one occasion when he had been in town for a few days, for he knew Selina had rather a contempt for the Reverend Hugh, as a conceited person who wished to be considered wiser than his neighbours, and did not know when he was well off; and by the vexation which she had betrayed when Hugh found it impossible to make out a day at Leytonstone, even under the inducement of Selina's promise that Frank should pick him up in town

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and drive him down in his trap. "It is extremely provoking," Selina had said, when Hugh's note of apology, announcing the necessity of his immediate return to Burnham, reached her, "just as he has come from Naples; I so particularly wanted to hear all about Maria." "But he hasn't come *last* from Naples, my dear," the aggravating Frank had remarked on that occasion; "and I should think Maria does not leave anything to be told you at second-hand. I never knew a woman write such letters in my life; they are as long as a Scotch parson's discourse." Mrs. Burdett regarded her husband with lofty disdain, hardly even tempered by pity. "Maria writes the best and most interesting letters *I* have ever read," she replied; "your experience, like your correspondence, is more extensive than mine."

"Quite true," returned Frank agreeably; "but that has nothing to do with Hugh Gaynor. I wish he had come, not because I want stale news from Naples—having had it so fresh, and so much of it yesterday—but because I should

do as you like, Selina ; I don't want to interfere ; but I certainly should have liked a few days' shooting at Meriton."

"A few days' shooting" was a great thing in the eyes of Frank Burdett ; there was indeed nothing greater in the way of pleasure, except a few weeks of the same pastime. But he would not have given this very broad hint, had he not seen that his wife merely wanted an excuse to abandon her position, and that he would do a politic thing in supplying her with a plausible one, which might be made, by a little Haviland ingenuity, to appear magnanimous.

"I am sure," said Selina, with amiably down-cast eyes, and hands folded upon the table-cloth in a meek manner which might have done credit to a Griselda, "I am ready to make any concession to a wish of yours." She glanced at Frank, who did not look off the newspaper with which he had replaced Mrs. Fanshaw's letter. "And really, perhaps, especially as Fanny is there—very extraordinary, I *must* say, her not writing to me beforehand—it would be more Christianlike

to overlook the past, and let Stephen know that we are ready to carry out the intention we had of visiting him before this unfortunate affair occurred."

Frank tried hard, and happily successfully, not to laugh.

"It's rather awkward, though," Selina continued; "for the few times I have written to mamma I have really not mentioned this person, as far as I remember. No, I am quite sure I never have mentioned her after the first letter: I quite see my duty now,"—Selina's meekness was quite marvellous here,—"but there *is* an awkwardness."

"Which so clever a woman as you are may be fairly trusted to get over," said Mr. Burdett, rising and gathering up his letters and papers. "What was not impossible for Fanny to accomplish will certainly be easy for you. But there's just *one* hint I may venture to give you, and which you will do well to take,—don't mention your brother's wife even to yourself as 'this person;' it is not safe or wise, my dear, I assure you."

And so saying, Selina's meekness having encouraged him to the point of audacity, Mr. Burdett decamped.

The not very ancient but particularly respectable home of the Havilands of Meriton, which the taste of its present mistress had elevated to a degree of elegance hitherto unknown to it, was the scene, before a fortnight had elapsed after this conversation, of a family gathering which offered a very perfect specimen of propriety to the observation of anyone who understood the "ins and outs" of the matter, which only Mr. Burdett was in a position to do. Everything had been done in the most correct way, and with the utmost insincerity; no one was deceived, and everyone was pleased. Stephen Haviland was very glad the Burdetts had not "made fools of themselves," principally on his mother's account. His unconscious education, under the influence of Julia, was too far advanced to permit his even remembering the time when Selina's opinion, Selina's approval, had its individual as well as its collective, or Haviland, value.

The meeting between the sisters—Mrs. Burdett and Mrs. Fanshaw—was truly characteristic. Fanny was very like Selina, as of course, being a Haviland, she was bound to be; but of a lazier, more lymphatic type, with more softness in her dark eyes, more fulness in her red lips, and less bustle and self-importance in her manner. But this difference was merely in manner; she held the Haviland creed whole and undivided. “Without doubt,” in her mind, the Havilands were “the people;” but she did not see the necessity of asserting the fact so frequently and emphatically as Selina asserted it. To be sure, she had no lurking distressing suspicions of a husband’s contumacy, his possible heresy. Mrs. Fanshaw’s Tom and Selina’s Frank were very different men; the one never formed an opinion of his own on any subject unconnected with the stable, the kennel, and their tenants; the other had an inconvenient amount of individuality. Mrs. Fanshaw had rather more intelligence than her sisters, and a decidedly better temper; for though she felt, or thought she felt, the “judgment” very severely, she made.

no angry demonstration to Stephen, and said very little about it to her sisters.

The Fanshaws were not very rich people, or particularly distinguished; and on the whole, Fanny's life had a suburban flavour which became distasteful at times, and she liked to banish it by a visit to Meriton. So when she told her Tom that she was going to write to Stephen and find out when they could go there, that gentleman acquiesced, as he usually did. The reception of Mr. and Mrs. Fanshaw by Julia Haviland was perfect in tact, in good breeding, and in feeling. She actually contrived so to shape her own conduct, that she completely covered the slight offensive boastfulness and ostentatious indifference of her husband's manner to his sister. Between her natural laziness, and her acquiescence in the family policy of making the best of it, Fanny was not very long about forgetting all the drawbacks, and deciding upon cultivating her sister-in-law. She had reached that happy state of mind when she wrote to Selina, with the result already described.

"Well, Fanny," said Mrs. Burdett, "I fancy this will not be very pleasant; but it is the right thing to do, on poor Stephen's account, and for mamma's sake."

"Yes, of course," said Fanny; "but do you know, I don't think you will find it at all unpleasant. Tom and I enjoy it immensely."

"Indeed! I shall hardly make up my mind so quickly. Mrs. Stephen is a better-mannered person than I expected."

"Is she not? Quite wonderful, I think. Things certainly might have been much worse."

And then the two ladies talked no more about their sister-in-law. It was, indeed, remarkable that they continued to be very reticent about her. The fact was, Julia had been too much for them, as she was for most people; had utterly disconcerted and upset their ideas; and each had come secretly to the wholesome conviction that she had been near doing a very impolitic and stupid thing, and had better reverse her position as rapidly and as quietly as possible. It was so much better not to talk about it, so much less unpleasant not

to have to make any *amende* to herself or her sister.

"Of course, I am delighted to have Selina and Fanny with me," said Mrs. Haviland to Julia, on the day following the arrival of the Burdetts; "but," she added timidly, and smoothing her daughter-in-law's hand with her own, with a movement half-nervous, half-caressing, "I hope you will not be less with me, my dear, because they are here. I am very happy with you."

"If I could bring Eliot Foster here," thought Julia, "and let him see for himself how thoroughly I have carried out the programme he thought so far-fetched and impossible, I think he would have a better opinion than ever of my head, and"—her face softened a little as the thought completed itself—"not a worse opinion, on the whole, of my heart."

Before the autumn came to a close, Julia's success, not only in a domestic, Haviland point of view, but on the broader social basis of "county" society, was complete. People stayed

more at home in those days, when "rushing about" was not at once epidemic and chronic, and became more thoroughly acquainted with their surroundings. The interval between whispering and gossiping over Stephen Haviland's marriage, pitying his mother, and wondering what So-and-so would do about visiting his wife, and the general conviction that Mrs. Haviland was an extremely charming woman, and quite an acquisition, was surprisingly short. The neighbourhood had not to resent any previous disappointments concerning him—he had not deceived any anxious mothers, or jilted any anxious daughters. Julia's account of him was strictly correct—when he had ceased to be exclusively occupied with his liver, he had fallen in love with her. He was known to be a rich—and popularly and not erroneously, believed to be a *very* rich—man, who had succeeded to a fine property, being already possessed of a large sum in ready-money and of considerable business faculties. Such a man, with a stake in the county, notions of hospitality quite Indian in their magni-

tude, a large and well-regulated establishment, and a very handsome and agreeable wife, who never had disagreeable relatives staying with her to take up her attention and require that of other people, was of considerable social value. In short, Julia Haviland carried every outwork brilliantly, and was now enthroned in the heart of the citadel.

Late in the winter season, Stephen Haviland and his wife took possession of their house in Berkeley-square, fitted up for their reception in a style which would have astonished all the dead-and-gone Havilands who had ever sojourned within the metropolis. It had not yet become the custom to pass the dreariest season of the year amid the dreariest scenes; and if it had, Julia would have set aside the custom. She liked town late in the winter, and she meant to live there. She had gone through all the preliminaries to the life of pleasure, excitement, and social success which she had entered upon, with every sense of enjoyment quickened to the utmost; and she had no notion of wasting any

more time. Every possible care had been taken to secure the comfort and well-being of Mrs. Haviland, who was perfectly satisfied to be in town; and now the reality of the life for which she had bargained with fate commenced for Julia Haviland. She would gain a firm footing in the world, and map her life out thoroughly, before the full tide of society should be pouring through the great arteries of London. She had been happy—yes, certainly happy, if not *quite* satisfied—down at Meriton; but she had always known there was something beyond, to which she was reaching. It was now within her grasp. Neither was she altogether sorry to lose sight for a time of Hugh Gaynor. He inspired her with an uncomfortable feeling, which she was aware did not arise so much from his knowledge of her, and of the past, as from the innate superiority of his mind, from the calm indifference with which he regarded, as altogether uncaring for estimation, those things in which she took pleasure, the objects of her life, the aims of her ambition.

In spite of herself she was forced to wish for his esteem, to feel an uneasy dread of his displeasure ; in spite of herself she shrunk from the many silent evidences which she perceived, that he held her lot rather in compassion than in envy. That she should not be regarded as the most enviable of women stung Julia's pride ; and some superstitious feeling within her made her dislike, almost to the extent of fearing it, the knowledge that he deeply commiserated her for the sorrow which she had never sustained. To a certain extent, her whole life was a lie ; why, then, did she feel so acutely that there was no shaking off the influence of it, the degradation of the one specific falsehood which she had told him ? Why did she feel at times that she almost hated him because the superior rectitude of his character had forced her to tell him that falsehood ; and at others, that to be with him was the best among the privileges afforded her by her successful venture in life ? Who can tell ? Such a contradiction is not to be explained or accounted for, except by the general truth that

in all natures there lurks, together with defiance, the germ of the love of good, and the perception of its beauty.

Hugh Gaynor was to remain for some time longer at Burnham, to give his health a fair trial in the winter, before he again went in search of a field for his ministrations. The rector, who gave his son up for incorrigible, and Mrs. Gaynor, who invited a good-looking niece to the vicarage in hopes that prettiness and proximity might have such an effect upon Hugh as to counteract what the good lady called his "nonsense," were uselessly angry at his intention of again leaving home. They did not know where he would go to—some horribly unhealthy place, no doubt; he had talked of the weavers being an interesting class,—intelligent, and consumptive, and that—there was not a vacancy at present; but he was in correspondence about a curacy or something at Coventry. So spoke his mother, vexed and vague. But he was still at Burnham when Julia went to London, and she saw him once or twice in the course of the winter. In the early

spring he completed his arrangements, and left Burnham.

"Hugh Gaynor has got the poor, dirty, and ignorant *clientèle* he wished for, Julia," said Stephen Haviland to his wife one day in February.

"Has he?" she said; "I am glad of it, since he was so anxious. Where is the place?"

"Beckthorpe, a little way from Coventry—a filthy place, I should say, and likely to combine the vices and the misery of town and country."

"He will get on splendidly, if it does not kill him," said Julia.

"And if it does, he will think that getting *off* splendidly," said Stephen; "so *he's* all right, anyhow."

Time went on, and the Havilands thrived and prospered. Julia gained her heart's desire. She was rich, beautiful, courted, beloved, and "the fashion." The cup of pleasure brimmed over for her; and though her husband had one sorrow, she did not share it. They had no children; but this did not grieve her, and she did not even pretend to feel with him in the matter. Mrs. Havi-

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land was inclined to do what for her was almost grumbling at the decrees of Providence. Julia, who never wavered or failed in her fulfilment of the resolution she had made, that Stephen's mother should have no reason to lament his marriage, was sometimes tried a little by the old lady's loving regrets.

"My dear," she said to her once, "it is not that I care so much about children while they are babies, though they do brighten up one's house and one's heart; but when one is old as I am, and all comfort and happiness must come through the hands of others, I should like to think that when that time comes for you, long after I am gone, you would have a son to be to you what Stephen is to me, and to give you a daughter like yourself."

But these were slight things after all—very little spots in such a full, blazing, tropical sun of prosperity. Nor was Julia at all likely to exaggerate them. She did not; she measured and weighed all that life brought to her accurately, and enjoyed it to the full. And she knew that

she had won the exact prize she had striven for, and found in it all she had expected, even though she sometimes paused in the course of her prosperous career to contemplate it, and to think, not with sadness or discontent, but with conviction, "It glitters, but it is not gold."

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